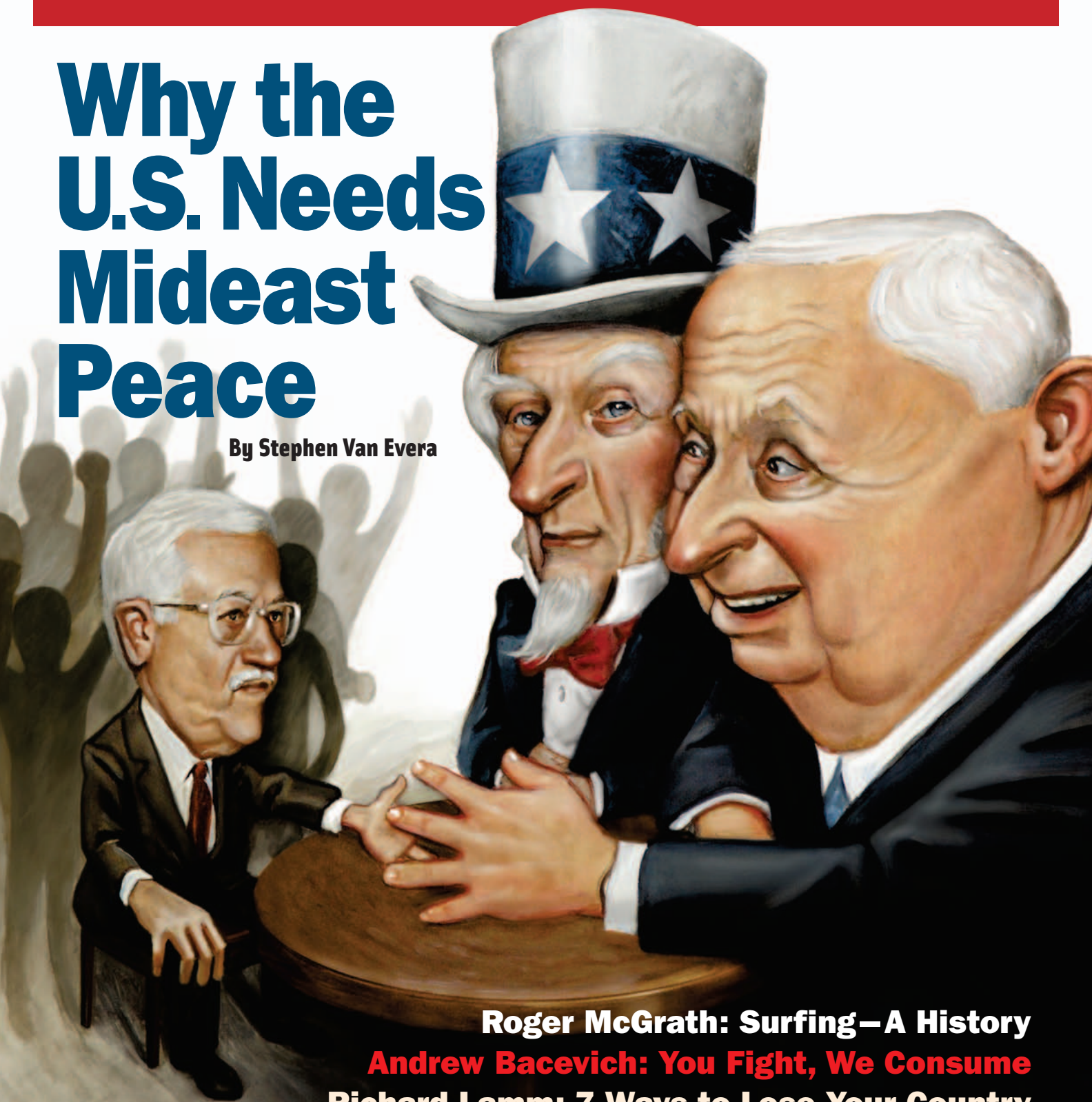


MARCH 14, 2005

# The American Conservative

## Why the U.S. Needs Mideast Peace

By Stephen Van Evera



**Roger McGrath: Surfing—A History**  
**Andrew Bacevich: You Fight, We Consume**  
**Richard Lamm: 7 Ways to Lose Your Country**

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## CLEARING THE AIR

Eamonn Fingleton's article ("Boeing, Boeing ... Gone," Jan. 31) is riddled with factual errors and faulty conclusions. He relies heavily on the specious work of a pair of "industrial geographers" from the University of Buffalo. Their conclusions have been roundly dismissed by legitimate industry experts as "beyond the realm of conceivable scenarios."

Fingleton's story is built around the Buffalo pair's erroneous premise that "nearly 70 percent of the (Boeing) 7E7's manufacturing content will come from foreign sources." The facts are exactly opposite. The 7E7, now called the 787, will have approximately 75 percent U.S. content by dollar value—which is about the same as today's 777.

We also found incredibly distasteful your choice of covers. Manipulating a photo of a passenger jet to suggest it is going to crash is as inappropriate as it is insensitive. It is an affront to the professionals who work tirelessly to make commercial aviation the world's safest form of mass transportation. One would hope for something less sensational and misleading from a journal that claims to offer thoughtful examination of serious issues.

THOMAS J. DOWNEY  
Vice President, Communications  
Boeing Commercial Airplanes  
*Seattle, Wash.*

### ***Eamonn Fingleton replies:***

Although Mr. Downey alleges my article was "riddled with factual errors," he challenges only one point: the 787's American content, he says, will be 75 percent, not 30 percent as alleged by my sources. That's a big discrepancy—but where's his evidence? While he airs an essentially frivolous complaint about the article's cover art and takes a disingenuous shot at my sources, he offers no geographic breakdown of 787-related jobs. Understandably so.

Boeing defines as "American" a vast swathe of foreign-sourced content. To help maximize the plane's apparent American content, key foreign suppliers are going through financial contortions to

ensure that Boeing is supplied from fig-leaf plants in the United States. Many of these will do no more than perfunctory processing on foreign added value. Even much of Boeing's own contribution will originate in its Australian and Canadian factories. According to a press announcement in late 2003, the most significant complete section to be made in the U.S. by Boeing will be the vertical tail fin. Meanwhile, fully 35 percent of the plane, including the wings, will be built by Japanese companies and a further 26 percent by an Italian-led consortium. While the foreigners' share is subject to adjustment and will include some American content, the decisive point is that Boeing's hollowed out American suppliers will go abroad for much of their advanced content—and indeed are allegedly being pressured by Boeing to do so. Perhaps Downey's most surprising claim is that the share of foreign content in the 787 will not exceed that in the 777. The 777 was planned in the 1980s when the United States still did some serious manufacturing.

## PROCESS DUE

I was surprised to read Austin Bramwell's support for Substantive Due Process (Jan. 31). The Due Process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment has been interpreted to contain certain rights, including the right to marry, have children, abort a child, and, more recently, to engage in sodomy.

Bramwell argues that because the right to marry is rooted in the Constitution (the word "marriage" appears nowhere in the document), Congress can define what "marriage" means. This is legitimizing an illegitimate enterprise and ought to be avoided. It is not a good argument anyway.

Though Bramwell is correct to point out that a constitutional amendment defining marriage "has no hope of passing," the solution is not to give in to the liberal agenda by an expansive reading of the Constitution. Not that a constitutional amendment defining marriage is a good idea. Conservatives want to mini-

mize the powers of the federal government. We don't want to turn that concept on its head by supporting an amendment that takes power away from the states.

A better solution is to propose a constitutional amendment that mirrors the Defense of Marriage Act. By turning DOMA into a constitutional amendment we will guarantee every state the right to decide for itself what "marriage" means and that no state needs to recognize marriages performed in another state. (This is of course necessary to avoid a court declaring DOMA unconstitutional.) This advances conservatives' interests by (1) isolating gay marriage to a handful of liberal states, (2) promoting states' rights, and (3) staying true to the text of the Constitution.

HIRBOD RASHIDI  
*Los Angeles, Calif.*

### ***Austin Bramwell replies:***

Substantive Due Process—which I abhor as much as Mr. Rashidi—is not the only possible source of unenumerated rights in the Fourteenth Amendment. On the contrary, however contested the original meaning of the Privileges or Immunities Clause, it almost certainly does protect an unspecified number of fundamental rights. Personally, I would prefer a Constitution that didn't protect any fundamental rights, much less any unenumerated ones, but as long as that's the Constitution we have, I would also prefer that those rights be protected by Congress rather than the Supreme Court.

Happily, Congress is exactly the institution to which the Fourteenth Amendment gives primary responsibility for enforcing the Fourteenth Amendment (see Section 5). In short, my proposal for a statute underscoring the national definition of marriage is consistent with both the original meaning of the Constitution and a conservative approach to constitutional government.

*The American Conservative* welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to [letters@amconmag.com](mailto:letters@amconmag.com), by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail.



SIPA

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[IRAQ]

## MANY HAPPY RETURNS?

The Iraqi election has apparently produced an absolute parliamentary majority for the United Iraqi Alliance, a group of Shi'ite religious parties. Their most likely coalition partner is the Kurdish Alliance. In any case, it appears that Prime Minister Allawi, the American selection to run Iraq, won't figure in its future—at least if the election results hold.

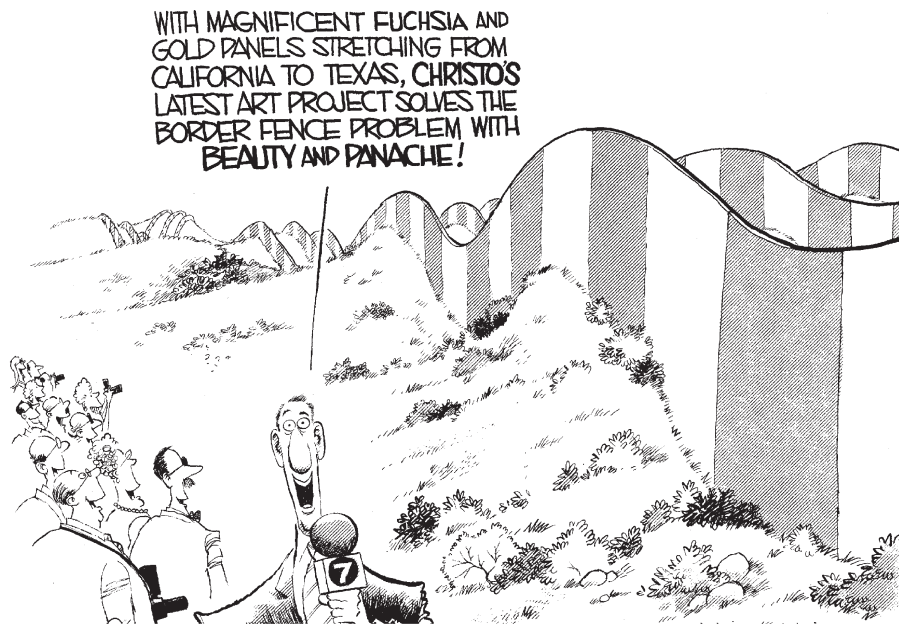
Speculation is perilous, but it is worth wondering whether the Bush administration is happy with the result: \$300 billion spent, nearly 1,500 dead, thousands of Americans seriously wounded—not to mention hundreds of thousands of Iraqis with dead relatives to avenge and destroyed property—all for a government with close links to the Shi'ite mullahs of Tehran. For that is the likely result: the leader of the Shi'ite coalition, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, spent two decades in Iran; the leader of the Kurdish Alliance is also close to Tehran.

It is not clear whether the new government will be able to enact *Sharia* in Baghdad, but it does seem that such a government would be less likely to co-operate with Bush administration plans to use Iraq as a platform to start a war with Iran. (Yes, we know that Condi Rice said there are “no plans” for an attack “now,” but there are numerous signs that one is being considered, and the neocon desire for a war with Iran is well-documented.) So perhaps the new Iraqi theocratic “democracy” will prove nettlesome to the neoconservative project of endless war in the Mideast. Not a Jeffersonian result, but hardly an unwelcome one.

[BUDGET]

## DOLLARS & NONSENSE

The Bush administration is busy congratulating itself on the frugality of its latest federal budget. While this may be true by profligate Bushie standards, a little fiscal honesty is in order.



STEVE BREEN/COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

The president's budget proposal usually ends up being a spending floor rather than a ceiling. Congress will increase spending beyond the requested levels and end only a fraction of the programs the administration has put on the chopping block. Last year, only five of the 65 programs slated for termination were abolished. And the 2006 spending blueprint requests new largesse of its own: \$1.5 billion more in foreign aid, \$268 million for coal research, \$260 million for hydrogen research, \$100 million to promote “healthy marriages,” and \$1.5 billion for the No Child Left Behind high-school initiative. All told, the budget weighs in at \$2.57 trillion, without a penny for the Iraq War factored in.

Bush could veto excessive congressional appropriations, but apparently he only reaches for that pen when Congress decides it might cut one of his programs. When Republicans sought to bring the Medicare prescription drug benefit back to its originally projected size—a mammoth \$400 billion—he promised any changes would meet his veto.

[FREEDOM]

## LIBERATE UNLV

The habits of freedom cannot be imposed at the barrel of a gun, but if they could, a good target for the U.S. military might

the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. There the libertarian economist Hans-Hermann Hoppe faces university punishment for allegedly offending a “protected group” in one of his lectures. Hoppe was teaching his banking and finance class about a general tendency of some groups to defer their spending and save more than others. Among the savers, parents of young children; among the non-savers, who tend to be less inclined to forgo immediate gratification, were the very young, the very old, and ... take a deep breath ... homosexuals.

Apparently this deeply offended one student, who filed a complaint to the university. It is beyond the scope of this space to speculate whether Hoppe's theory might in fact be true (though recent front-page stories about the growth of methamphetamine use and behaviors involving hundreds of sex partners in pockets of the gay community do not exactly discredit it). But clearly the student who was so outraged that he felt he had to file a formal complaint to the university has led, intellectually at least, a very sheltered life.

A university with any sense of academic freedom (as opposed to a *madrassa*) would have laughed aloud and told the offended student to grow up. Regrettably, UNLV chose the other course, and put Professor Hoppe

through a gamut of university hearings, finally reprimanding him and taking away a scheduled pay raise. Hoppe is being represented by an ACLU attorney.

If the university doesn't back down, it might be a job for the Marines.

[IMMIGRATION]

## CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

On a slightly more free campus, the University of North Texas chapter of the Young Conservatives of Texas recently held a "Capture an Illegal Immigrant Day," with members dressing in bright orange t-shirts emblazoned "illegal immigrant" and "catch me if you can." Students who apprehended one of the illegals received a 100 Grand candy bar in reward—symbolizing the economic drain of unlawful immigration. Those caught also explained to their captors the perils posed by Bush's guest-workers plan, a brave and principled stance for young Texan conservatives.

Predictably, the event raised howls of protest. "They might as well be wearing white hoods," said one member of a Latino fraternity. Unlike UNLV, however, the University of North Texas did not try to squelch unpopular ideas, though the Young Conservatives were confined to a "free-speech zone." Chris Brown, chairman of UNT's Young Conservatives, had the right response to those who claimed to take offense: "You know what's offensive? People coming into my country illegally."

[POLITICS]

## NO CHOICE IN PRO-CHOICE

Tim Roemer was the last man standing against Howard Dean in the race for chairman of the Democratic National Committee. He should have been a contender: Roemer, a former congressman from Indiana, had backing from both House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader

Harry Reid, and as the last anti-Dean candidate, opposition could have coalesced around him. But it didn't—instead, Roemer dropped out. Why? Because Roemer is pro-life, and his support evaporated as his position was publicized.

If the Democrats want to offer values voters any kind of choice at the polls in the future, they would do well to listen to Roemer. In a *Washington Post* op-ed after his withdrawal, the former congressman noted that Democrats had been outflanked, with Republicans retaining the support of pro-lifers even as "Bush campaigned throughout the country" with the pro-abortion Republicans Rudy Giuliani and Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the new Republican National Committee chairman "appointed JoAnn Davidson—who is pro-choice—as co-chairman of the RNC."

For their own good, Democrats might want to extend a little more tolerance toward a truly persecuted minority—pro-lifers in their own party.

[RIP]

## SAM FRANCIS (1947-2005)

As we went to press, we heard news of the death of Sam Francis, a wise and provocative conservative author and thinker and occasional contributor to these pages. Sam had a wry humor, a well developed sense of the tragic, a formidable knowledge of political theory—he was of the most open-minded and interesting exponents of a school of conservative thought that respected the Old South and its institutions. An award-winning editorialist at the *Washington Times*, he later fell victim to the political correctness that swept the conservative world during the 1990s. We are saddened for many serious reasons but also because Sam quite heroically lost about 130 pounds during the past two years and should have had many productive years ahead of him. ■

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# The Stillborn Empire

Did I miss something? Where did all the “not since Rome” bombast, talk of America’s “benevolent global hegemony,” “Pax Americana,” and the New World Order

disappear to? Whatever happened to the “jodhpurs and pith helmets” crowd?

Just a year ago, in the Irving Kristol Lecture at the annual AEI dinner, columnist Charles Krauthammer rhapsodized about America’s “global dominion” and our having “acquired the largest seeming empire in the history of the world.”

We have “overwhelming global power,” said Krauthammer. We are history’s “designated custodians of the international system.” When the Soviet Union fell, “something new was born, something utterly new—a unipolar world dominated by a single superpower unchecked by any rival and with decisive reach in every corner of the globe. This is a staggering new development in history, not seen since the fall of Rome. ... Even Rome is no model for what America is today.”

Well, reality does have a way of intruding upon one’s fantasies, and, looking at our world today, it would seem multipolarism is making quite a comeback.

Castro, though literally on his last legs, yet defies the Americans and is about to be succeeded as the leading hemispheric Yankee-baiter by Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan ruler who lately defeated a U.S.-backed recall. Chavez has just ordered Russian-built MIG-29s and purchased 100,000 AK-47s and, despite U.S. protests, Moscow appears ready to sell.

And as Chavez finds imitators in the Andean nations, the Mexican government instructs its citizens in how best to sneak across the border into the United States. Would Caesar Augustus have put up with such as this in *mare nostrum*?

Our NATO allies, Tony Blair included, are lifting their embargo on weapons sales to China over the protests of President Bush. Old Europe remains adamant in its refusal to send troops to Iraq, as the Ukrainians and Poles, following the Spanish, quietly depart the beleaguered nation.

Germany, France, and Britain are negotiating a deal by which Iran, if she will submit to regular IAEA inspections, will be permitted to enrich uranium for nuclear power, be granted security guarantees, and be brought into the WTO. America opposes the three allies’ concessions, but there is no NATO support for U.S. military action. Should Bush exercise that option, America will be alone in fighting insurgents from the eastern border of Syria to the western border of Pakistan. U.S. generals are advising the president that his legions are already stretched thin.

The Iraqi elections appear to have deposed our client Allawi and empowered Shia parties with ties to Iran and Kurds who covet Kirkuk and its oil and look to ultimate independence.

This has the Turks grumbling as well as the dispossessed Sunnis, among whom the newly reignited insurgency first arose. Whatever the neocons’ vision of Iraq—as strategic base camp for World War IV or crown jewel of Middle East empire—Americans seem to be looking for an exit.

As for the Bush Doctrine—no axis-of-evil nation will be allowed to acquire weapons of mass destruction—it is being tested by Tehran and defied by Kim Jong Il, who has crossed every red

line Bush has put down and now claims to have nuclear weapons. America’s response? Please come back to the six-power talks.

Russia’s Putin is consolidating power in the czarist tradition, seeking to resurrect Moscow’s old sphere of influence, and is conducting military exercises jointly with Beijing.

And openly contemptuous China lectures us on our failure to rein in our voracious appetite for imports, which is sending the dollar the way of the peso. Beijing refuses to pressure North Korea to terminate its nuclear-weapons program, permits Pyongyang to use Chinese territory to transship missiles and nuclear materiel, and spends a goodly slice of its \$160 billion trade surplus with America to build up air, naval, and missile forces for the showdown with Taiwan.

“Unchecked by any rival,” is how Krauthammer described the new Rome. Yet as one watches the Old Republic spend herself into bankruptcy, run up trade deficits that debauch her currency, decline to defend her own bleeding borders, permit rivals to loot her technology and cart off her manufacturing plants, America does in a way resemble Rome. But it is, unfortunately, the Rome of the late fourth century.

For America 2005, unlike the America we knew not long ago, has become a newly dependent nation, dependent on the Gulf for oil to run our economy, on imports for the necessities of our national life, on Beijing and Tokyo to buy the bonds to subsidize our self-indulgent lifestyles.

The Kipling of the late Victorian era was speaking of folks like us when he wrote in his poem “Recessional”: “For frantic boast and foolish word/Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!” ■

[set the table]

# Vital Interest

Winning the War on Terror requires a Mideast peace settlement.

By Stephen Van Evera

A VISIT BY CONDOLEEZZA RICE to Jerusalem and the West Bank, a Sharon-Abbas summit, a ceasefire of sorts—suddenly there is diplomatic movement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is long overdue, and these small steps must foreshadow larger ones. The fact is that this conflict is not only a blight on Israel and Palestine. It now threatens the safety of Americans as well by aiding al-Qaeda's recruiting efforts, helping its terrorists find friendly haven in Mideast societies, and making Arabs and non-Arab Muslims less willing to co-operate with efforts to destroy al-Qaeda networks.

The U.S. should treat the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a serious menace to our own national security and move forcefully to end it. Many pieces needed for a settlement are now in place, and though the conflict poses an unprecedented threat, it is also ripe for a solution.

Whatever helps al-Qaeda endangers the U.S., and we should not be lulled by the quiet since the 9/11 attacks. Al-Qaeda remains determined to wreak mass havoc: its gruesome goals were expressed in Osama bin Laden's declaration that "to kill Americans ... civilian and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible." His press spokesman Suleiman Abu Ghaith has claimed a right for al-Qaeda to kill four million Americans, including two million children.

After the U.S. destroyed al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan, it morphed into a more decentralized organization, but it remains dangerous. Bin Laden wants to acquire weapons of mass destruction and may also have the opportunity: enough nuclear materials remain poorly secured in Russia to make tens of thousands of Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs. Many former Soviet scientists also remain underpaid or unemployed, primed for hiring by terrorists.

Why does al-Qaeda endure against U.S. efforts? How does it still find recruits and support? An important reason lies in the poison spread through the Mideast by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Opinion polls suggest that the conflict is highly salient in the Arab and Islamic world. Surveys also show that American policy toward Israel and Palestine is deeply despised among Arabs and Muslims and that the U.S. itself is also increasingly unpopular in these quarters. Further, polls show that the first and second phenomena cause the third—that Arabs and Muslims resent the U.S. largely because they care about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and disapprove of U.S. policies toward that conflict.

A March 2001 poll commissioned by the University of Maryland asked respondents in five Arab states—Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Lebanon—to identify

their "single most important issue," including domestic political issues. In Egypt, 79 percent named the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; 60 percent did so in Jordan, Kuwait, the UAE, and Lebanon. An additional 20 percent in these last four countries identified the conflict among their top three issues. Similarly, a spring 2002 Zogby survey of five Arab states—Egypt, Kuwait, the UAE, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia—found that about two-thirds of respondents viewed the Palestinian issue as "very important" or "the most important" issue facing the Arab world.

These poll numbers may be somewhat inflated as respondents may have feared declaring a prime concern about local governance. (Taking issue with the government can be unsafe in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world.) Thus those whose main concern is local mal-governance perhaps stifled that thought and spoke of Israel-Palestine instead. But even discounting heavily for this possibility, these polls indicate broad and intense public concern over the Israel-Palestine question.

The reasons are three: the *intifada* that flared in the Palestinian territories after Sept. 28, 2000; the new Arab satellite TV, including Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and other channels; and the strength of broad Arab and Muslim identities in the region. The *intifada* gives the conflict a dramatic and cruel face, ideal for inflam-



matory TV coverage. Satellite TV, which appeared only in the 1990s, provides a new medium for piping disturbing pictures into the homes of Arabs and Muslims far from Israel-Palestine. Their Arab/Muslim identities are activated by these images, stirring anger even among non-Palestinians.

Arabs widely disapprove of the expansionist policies pursued by Ariel Sharon's Israeli government and fault the U.S. for giving him almost unconditional support. That spring 2002 Zogby survey found minuscule support in five Arab states for U.S. policy toward the Palestinians: only 2 to 6 percent of respondents in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Lebanon voiced approval, and only 10 percent in the UAE. By contrast, 89 to 94 percent of respondents in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Lebanon, and 83 percent in the UAE, voiced disapproval of U.S. policy. In the world of opinion surveys, such huge majorities

Jordan. A Zogby study taken just three months later found even deeper antagonism: 69 percent unfavorable to 20 percent favorable in Lebanon, 73 percent to 14 percent in the UAE, 78 percent to 15 percent in Jordan, 88 percent to 11 percent in Morocco, 94 percent to 4 percent in Saudi Arabia, and 98 percent to 2 percent in Egypt, the beneficiary of \$2 billion in annual American aid. Note that the enmity extends even to traditional U.S. allies like Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan.

And *pace* President Bush, they do not "hate us for our freedoms." They hate our policies. Zogby again, May 2004: 76 percent in Jordan, 78 percent in the UAE, 79 percent in Lebanon, 81 percent in Saudi Arabia, 84 percent in Morocco, and 95 percent in Egypt declared that American policy toward the Arab-Israeli dispute was "quite important" or "extremely important" in shaping their attitudes toward the United States. Similar majori-

ties indicated that what America does is more important than who she is: 76 to 16 in Jordan up to 90 to 1 in Egypt.

that region are militantly anti-American and pro-al-Qaeda. These dangerous fish could swim no more in Mao's metaphorical sea if the public willed otherwise—as it would if it viewed the U.S. with more approval.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the sole cause of Arab/Muslim animosity toward us. The war in Iraq and the impact of virulent anti-American propaganda from al-Qaeda and other Islamist movements also stoke the fire. Winding down the Iraqi occupation would help, as might stronger public diplomacy to counter al-Qaeda's propaganda. But U.S.-Mideast relations will not heal fully while irritation from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict persists. In the meantime, al-Qaeda will benefit accordingly.

Al-Qaeda's leaders will not be weaned from their campaign of terror by an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. Terror has become their way of life, their reason for being. They cannot be conciliated; they must be destroyed. To achieve this, their support base must be stripped away, and that can only come by engineering a large improvement in Arab/Muslim public attitudes toward the U.S. This will leave the extremists friendless and exposed, to face capture or death. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be ended not to appease their anger but to lay the basis for their demise.

The conflict fuels friction with foreign governments as well as peoples. Often the U.S. needs these governments' help against al-Qaeda and other foes, and U.S. national security suffers accordingly. America's NATO partners are essential to defeating al-Qaeda, but disputes over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have frayed U.S. relations with these allies. Disagreements stemming from Arab-Israeli strife have also disrupted important U.S.-Syrian co-operation against al-Qaeda. For a time after the 9/11 attacks, Syria gave the U.S. valuable assistance including intelli-

## **A ZOGBY SURVEY FOUND MINUSCULE SUPPORT IN ARAB STATES FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE PALESTINIANS: ONLY 2 TO 6 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS IN EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, AND LEBANON VOICED APPROVAL.**

are equivalent to unanimity. A similar picture emerged in the three non-Arab states that Zogby surveyed. Approval of U.S. policy toward the Palestinians stood at 10 percent in Pakistan, 5 percent in Indonesia, and 3 percent in Iran; disapproval registered 79 percent, 75 percent, and 95 percent respectively.

Hostility toward American policy translates into enmity for the U.S. as a whole. A March 2004 Pew Research Center poll of four Muslim countries found unfavorable views of the U.S. outnumbering positive views by 61 to 21 percent in Pakistan, 63 to 30 percent in Turkey, 68 to 27 percent in Morocco, and a remarkable 93 percent to 5 percent in

ties indicated that what America does is more important than who she is: 76 to 16 in Jordan up to 90 to 1 in Egypt.

Anti-Americanism in the Arab/Islamic world matters because it fosters a friendly environment in which al-Qaeda can flourish, raising new recruits and money. A public friendly to the U.S. would be our eyes and ears, helping to glean the intelligence that is vital to successful counterterrorism. But hostile populations sit on their hands, letting the terrorists hide in their midst while the U.S. searches blindly. Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and other al-Qaeda leaders run free in northwest Pakistan today because the people of



gence that helped thwart an al-Qaeda attack on the U.S. Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain and an attack on an American target in Ottawa. (Syria's secular regime has long been targeted by Islamist radicals, including al-Qaeda, so the regime has worked to develop intelligence against these movements, often surpassing U.S. intelligence. It has hundreds of files on al-Qaeda and has penetrated cells throughout the Middle East and Europe.) But co-operation has since ended, foundering on frictions with the U.S. that result largely from Syria's conflict with Israel, which is aggravated in turn by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

So the bad news is that the conflict is damaging American national security. The good news is that many pieces are now in place for a peace settlement. Six in particular bear mention.

1. Years of negotiation have made clear to both sides the terms that each can and cannot accept. If they want peace, they know what its outlines must be. Long months of fumbling in the dark for a mutually acceptable formula will not be necessary. That formula is well known.
2. Most Israelis and Palestinians now agree on the same peace terms. Specifically, polls taken in December 2004 and January 2005 show that 54 percent of Palestinians and 64 percent of Israelis endorse the parameters for settlement proposed by President Clinton in December 2000. If the citizens can agree on the terms, there is little reason their leaders cannot do likewise.
3. Yasser Arafat's demise in November 2004 has brought to power a new Palestinian leadership under Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) that opposes violence and gives all indication of seeking peace on reasonable terms.

4. The Palestinian *intifada* that began in September 2000 has made major Arab states more predisposed to foster peace. Most importantly, the Egyptian government now fears that passions stirred by watching the *intifada* are causing the Egyptian public to mobilize in ways that threaten the Mubarak regime. The fear is that crowds chanting "down with Sharon" at noon could switch to "down with Mubarak" at ten minutes past. Other Arab regimes have also come to favor an Arab-Israeli settlement for similar reasons. This new mood was signaled by the Abdullah peace plan, offered by the Arab League at its March 2002 summit, which envisions a settlement that involves acceptance by the Arabs of Israel's 1967 borders, no demand for large return of the 1948 refugees to Israel, and full integration of Israel into the larger Arab world. If the Palestinians and Israelis want to make peace, they will now find many other Arabs willing to help it happen.

5. Israelis are increasingly worried that Israel will lose its Jewish character unless it makes a land-for-peace trade. This fear extends to important elements of Likud, which see the West Bank as Israeli territory but now accept that demographic realities require Israeli withdrawal.

6. Israel no longer faces a credible threat of conventional attack from its east. Israeli hardliners have long claimed that a land-for-peace trade was unwise because Israel needed to hold the West Bank as a buffer against possible invasion by Iraq and Syria. But over the past 20 years, the threat of eastern invasion has largely disappeared as the economies of Syria and Iraq have stagnated, their Soviet sponsor and arms supplier has collapsed, and the United States has smashed Saddam's regime and put

Iraq under occupation. The extent of the eastern threat was always debatable, but Saddam's demise makes clear that it exists no more, as Syria poses no serious threat by itself. Hence Israel can now be more forthcoming about trading land for peace.

If the U.S. pushes for peace, it pushes on an open door. But peace is not possible on any terms. The range acceptable to both sides is very narrow. The limits are basically those of the four major peace plans widely discussed since 2000: the Clinton bridging proposals of December 2000, the Abdullah Plan of March 2002, the Geneva Accord of December 2003, and the Ayalon-Nusseibeh (or "People's Voice") initiative, also of December 2003. These proposals envision Israel's withdrawal from all the territories it occupied in the 1967 War, except for minor border adjustments involving equivalent gains and losses for both sides, in exchange for a full and final peace. Control of the city of Jerusalem would be shared along ethnic lines. Control of its holy places, including the Temple Mount area, would also be shared. The West Bank and Gaza would form a Palestinian state that accepts sharp limits on its military forces in order to ensure Israel's security. The Palestinians would not insist on a large return of Palestinian refugees to Israel, instead seeing their right of return recognized mainly by generous compensation to the refugees.

Neither side will accept terms outside these parameters. Israel will never agree to a large return of refugees to Israel; Palestinian insistence on a large return would torpedo peace. And the Palestinians will accept no deal that they cannot credibly claim involves full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Jordan's King Hussein both got full Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian and Jordanian territory in

their earlier peace deals with Israel, and today's Palestinian leaders need to claim that they won the same terms to quiet their own radicals, who will otherwise accuse them of surrendering the national cause by accepting second-best treatment—"not even what Sadat got! Not even what Hussein got!" Accordingly, Israel will scuttle peace if it offers less than full withdrawal—as it did at the failed talks at Camp David II in the summer of 2000, where it unwisely insisted on retaining 8 percent of the West Bank and parts of Palestinian East Jerusalem.

What U.S. action does peace require? The two sides cannot make peace on their own; the U.S. must lead them to it. Specifically, it must frame its own final-status peace plan and use carrots and sticks to persuade both sides to agree. Enough with Oslo-style, open-ended peace plans: the two sides will move forward more willingly if they know their destination. And enough with passive mediation: strong U.S. persuasion is necessary. If either side needs incentives to move forward, inducements—both positive and negative—should be starkly framed and firmly applied.

The American final-status plan should involve a full Israeli withdrawal in exchange for full and final peace, in line with the four previous peace plans. The U.S. should use the 2003 Quartet roadmap as its work plan to move the parties toward its final-status agreement and closely oversee progress, framing a schedule for the fulfillment of both sides' obligations and enforcing compliance with that timeline.

The new Palestinian leadership may need U.S. persuasion on two issues: right of return and end of violence. Some Palestinians choke on the notion that those driven from Israel in 1948 will not be allowed to return. But the necessities of peacemaking require that the Palestinians

accept this. The Palestinian leadership also must eventually disarm the various terrorist groups that operate in the territories and establish firm central control of all instruments of force. Mahmoud Abbas may adopt these policies without pressure, but if not the U.S. should apply whatever weight is required.

Israel's government more clearly needs strong American persuasion. Prime Minister Sharon will not freely offer anything close to full withdrawal from the West Bank to gain peace. Instead, he aims to create a Palestinian mini-state on perhaps half of the West Bank, with no presence in Jerusalem and no control of its airspace, and to annex to Israel the other half of the West Bank and all of Palestinian East Jerusalem including the Muslim holy places. No Palestinian leader would ever accept such terms, so Sharon aims to impose them unilaterally.

Sharon's reasons for insisting on retaining large chunks of the West Bank are hard to fathom. He is not known for deep religious concerns, so these are probably not at work. Rather, he is by reputation a national-security hawk. The collapse of the eastern invasion threat over the past two decades should have made him more willing to trade land for peace. But it hasn't. Thus Sharon's motives are a puzzle. For whatever reason, Sharon is now pursuing goals that preclude a peace settlement.

Accordingly, the U.S. must persuade Sharon to drop his pursuit of Israeli expansion. Carrots should include the prospect of large economic aid to cover the cost of adjusting Israeli defenses to new borders and the prospect of a formal alliance with the United States if Arab-Israeli peace is achieved. As a stick, the U.S. should explain that no U.S. government can remain allied to another government that pursues policies that injure U.S. national security. The U.S. should elaborate that Sharon's

policy of retaining large chunks of the West Bank precludes an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement; that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict damages U.S. national security; and that the U.S. therefore insists, as an absolute condition of continuing the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship, that Sharon's policy of expansion be discarded. Instead Sharon must agree to make peace within the terms of the four peace plans mentioned above.

Such a position, pursued with energy, will likely bring the Palestinians and Israelis to a settlement. The publics on both sides already favor moderate policies that align with peace, and they will not support leaders whose policies threaten rupture with the United States. Hence leaders on both sides will find themselves impelled toward peace if the U.S. forcefully applies its carrots and sticks to get them there.

Of course, the current climate in Washington precludes a policy of active U.S. pressure. Instead the Bush team now plans only some rather passive mediation unlinked to a strong U.S. policy. This will not be nearly enough to bring peace. Even the current ceasefire will inevitably break down unless it is reinforced by strong U.S. pressure for peace. The present Mideast calm is refreshing, but without a far more forceful U.S. policy it is only the calm before another storm.

Americans who care about U.S. national security should therefore work to change the Washington climate. Our security requires al-Qaeda's defeat, and that demands a Palestinian-Israeli peace. Our government is derelict if it does not pursue such a settlement—soon and with full force. ■

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# Living Room War

You fight. We consume.

**By Andrew J. Bacevich**

THE CONTRAST could hardly be more striking.

When Confederates attacked Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln responded by immediately quintupling the size of the U.S. Army, calling for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion. As events soon demonstrated, this was a mere down payment. Utterly determined to repair the Union, Lincoln would stop at nothing to achieve his aim. In the bloody Civil War that ensued, virtually every household in the nation, both North and South, found itself called upon to sacrifice.

Similarly, when the Japanese attack of Dec. 7, 1941 thrust the United States into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wasted no time in putting the entire nation on a war footing. He directed immediate implementation of the War Department's "Victory Plan," calling for the creation of an army of some eight million. The draft, initiated a year earlier on a limited scale, expanded many times over, the state asserting unconditional authority to order male citizens to serve "for the duration." To outfit fighting forces with the tanks, artillery pieces, fighter planes, and bombers they required, the federal government terminated the production of consumer durables, imposed wage and price controls, rationed scarce materials, and generally made it clear that nothing would impede the war effort. For Americans in and out of uniform, World War II became an all-encompassing enterprise. Other priorities would have to wait.

Not so with the global War on Terror. The attack of Sept. 11 elicited from the American people a universal sense of shock, anger, and outrage. But when it came to tapping the energies inherent in that instantaneous emotional response, the administration of George W. Bush did essentially nothing.

Instead of a Lincolnesque summons to "think anew and act anew," President Bush instructed his fellow citizens to "enjoy America's great destination spots." Within weeks of the terrorist attack, he was urging folks to "Get down to Disney World in Florida." Rather than announcing that the imperative of victory had now transcended all other priorities—in his day, FDR had pointedly retired "Dr. New Deal," making way for "Dr. Win-the-War"—Bush thought it more important for Americans to "enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed."

Americans took heed. Within remarkably short order, the country went back to business as usual. Almost as if 9/11 hadn't happened, ordinary citizens resumed their single-minded pursuit of happiness. Rather than entailing collective sacrifice, "war" this time around meant at most occasional annoyances, the most onerous involving the removal of one's shoes while transiting airport security. Although patriotic Americans acknowledged an obligation to "Support the Troops," fulfilling that obligation generally meant displaying decals on the rear of an SUV. Should preventing another 9/11, or the even more devastating attack that officials ominously hint lurks just around the corner, oblige American con-

sumers to tighten their belts and make do with less? Don't be silly.

Bush the warrior-president has signaled his approval of this response. Instead of a call to service delivered via the local draft board, the commander in chief made a point of easing the burdens of citizenship. Through simultaneous spending hikes and tax cuts, he off-loaded onto future generations responsibility to foot the bill for the present generation's security.

Further, even as he declared that the events of 9/11 had thrust the United States into a global conflict likely to last for years if not decades, and even as he vowed to liberate the Islamic world and to eliminate evil itself, the president carefully refrained from suggesting that such an enterprise might require expanding the U.S. military services. Despite the extraordinary challenges said to lie ahead, the president assumed from the outset that the all-volunteer force as it existed on Sept. 11 provided the United States all that it needed to wage a protracted global war. From the outset, Bush and his lieutenants took it for granted that the regulars—0.5 percent of the entire population—backed up by a modest number of reservists would suffice to get the job done.

On the one hand, according to Bush, the United States after 9/11 embarked upon a mighty endeavor, a life or death struggle against an implacable enemy. On the other hand, the president's actual policies suggested prevailing in that endeavor would not require anything remotely comparable to a mobilization



of the nation's resources. Notwithstanding the throwaway line from his second inaugural summoning the nation's youth to "make the choice to serve in a cause larger than your wants, larger than yourself," President Bush clearly expects the nation to triumph even while serenely persisting in its comfortable peacetime routines.

How are we to reconcile this apparent contradiction? How can we explain the disparity between a monumentally ambitious agenda that is making even some dyed-in-the-wool Reaganites squirm and policies seemingly designed to encourage popular complacency and self-indulgence?

One answer might be that in the inner circles of power the global War on Terror qualifies as a war only in a metaphorical sense, comparable, say, to the War on Poverty or the War on Drugs. But Bush has gone out of his way to correct any such misapprehension, first by invading Afghanistan, then by promulgating a doctrine of preventive war, and finally by implementing that doctrine through his invasion of Iraq. When this president

war. During the 1990s, Republican Party elites (and more than a few of their Democratic counterparts) convinced themselves that old-fashioned warfare, which relied on large numbers of soldiers and massive arsenals of destructive but not terribly accurate weapons, had gone the way of the steam locomotive and the typewriter. A new model of high-tech warfare, waged by highly skilled professionals equipped with "smart" weapons, had begun to emerge, with the Pentagon far out in front of any potential adversary in grasping the significance of this military revolution.

This image of transformed war derived from, but also reinforced, the technology-hyped mood prevailing during the years just prior to Bush's election in 2000. By common consent, the defining characteristics of this Information Age were speed, control, and choice. Even as it was empowering the individual, information technology was reducing the prevalence of chance, surprise, and random occurrences. Henceforth, everything relevant could be known and, if known, could be taken into

operations of modern armies. Economy, predictability, and political relevance would constitute the hallmarks of war in the Information Age.

Further, this new style of technowar relied not on the huge, industrial-age armies, but on compact formations consisting of select volunteers. Winning wars during the 20th century had required guts and muscle. Winning wars in the new century just dawning was going to emphasize the seamless blending of technology and skill, consigning the average citizen to the role of spectator. Fighting promised to remain something that other people were paid to do.

This vision of surgical, frictionless, postmodern war seemingly offered to the United States the prospect of something like permanent global military supremacy. Better still, at least among the activist neoconservatives who came to exercise great influence in the Bush administration, it held the promise of removing the constraints that had hitherto inhibited the United States in the actual use of its military power. With American society as a whole insulated from the effects of conflict, elites could expect to enjoy greater latitude in deciding when and where to use force.

These militaristic fantasies possessed an intoxicating allure akin to, complementing, and making plausible the ideological fantasies suggesting that the United States after 9/11 was called upon to remake the world in its own image. Hubris in the realm of military affairs meshed neatly with hubris in the realm of international politics.

Alas, as with seemingly brilliant military schemes throughout history, this attractive vision did not survive contact with the enemy. As so often happens, it turns out that our adversaries do not share our views of how modern war is to be conducted. At least, that has been the verdict of the Iraq War thus far. Launched with the breezy expectation

## WITH AMERICAN SOCIETY INSULATED FROM THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICT, ELITES ENJOY GREATER LATITUDE IN DECIDING WHEN AND WHERE TO USE FORCE.

speaks of a global war, he means precisely that—large-scale, open-ended military campaigns conducted in far-flung theaters of operations. Scholars might argue about whether among Muslims *jihad* refers to war as such or to a form of spiritual struggle. But when it comes to Mr. Bush's *jihad*, the facts permit no such confusion.

A second, more plausible explanation for the apparent disparity between the president's grandiose agenda and his willingness to let the country coast along undisturbed is to be found in the Bush administration's view of modern

account. The expected result was to lessen, if not eliminate, uncertainty, risk, waste, and error and to produce quantum improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

The potential for applying information technology to armed conflict—long viewed as an area of human endeavor especially fraught with uncertainty, risk, waste, and error—appeared particularly attractive. Given access to sufficient information, man could regain control of war, arresting its former tendency to become total. Swiftiness, stealth, agility, and precision would characterize the

that a tidy and decisive preventive war held the prospect of jumpstarting efforts to democratize the Middle East, Operation Iraqi Freedom has transitioned willy-nilly from a demonstration of “shock and awe” into something very old and very familiar: an ugly insurgency conducted by a tough, elusive, and adaptable foe. On the battlefields of the Sunni Triangle, technology and skill have a part to play; but guts and muscle will determine the outcome.

Whether the muscle of the existing all-volunteer force will prove adequate to the task has become an open question. Already, signs of eroding American fighting power, notably a sharp drop in reserve recruiting and retention, have begun to crop up. Steadily accumulating reports of misconduct by U.S. troops suggest that discipline is beginning to unravel.

This situation cannot be sustained indefinitely. Although the armed services today are by no means confronting the sort of crisis that toward the end of Vietnam brought them to the verge of collapse, the process of institutional decay has begun. Unless checked, that process may become irreversible.

The Pentagon is attempting to “manage” the problem, but such efforts can only go so far. A much-touted internal reorganization of the Army designed to increase the total number of combat brigades may be the equivalent of trying to get five patties rather than four out of the same pound of ground beef. Increasing re-enlistment bonuses, loosening recruiting standards, recalling retirees to active duty, imposing stop-loss policies to postpone the discharge of soldiers whose enlistments have expired, easing restrictions on the assignment of women to forward areas, increasing the reliance on contractors and mercenaries, all of these are mere stopgaps. None get to the core issue: Mr. Bush has too few soldiers doing too many things, while the rest of the country blissfully contents

itself shopping and watching TV.

Some informed observers have argued that in the specific case of Iraq the presence of large numbers of U.S. troops is exacerbating rather than reducing existing security problems. That said, and recognizing that Iraq forms but one facet of the Bush administration’s larger project that aims to purge the globe of tyrants and bring about the final triumph of liberty for all, there can be no denying that a yawning gap exists between U.S. grand strategy and the forces that the Pentagon can call upon to implement that strategy.

In pursuit of the president’s goal of eliminating tyranny, American military forces today are badly overstretched. But the nation is not. In this yawning gap between breathtakingly grand ideological goals and the failure to raise up the instruments of power to achieve those goals lies the full measure of this administration’s recklessness and incompetence. ■

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# Newest Deal

Talk Right, spend Left?

By W. James Antle III

“AND SO WE MUST join together to strengthen and save Social Security.” This line from President Bush’s State of the Union address brought many conservatives to their feet, but not because they want to extend the legacy of the New Deal. Their hope is that transforming Social Security will effect the biggest change in the country’s politics since FDR. Yet they should watch carefully: Bush has a terrible record of seeing his free-market reform plans to fruition. With the single exception of tax cuts, whenever efforts to build an ownership society have bumped up against big-government conservatism, big-government conservatism has won.

Social Security reform has become an issue in part because of underlying fiscal and demographic realities. Benefits are scheduled to increase at a faster rate than the payroll-tax receipts that finance them. The ratio of workers paying into the system to retirees drawing benefits is

declining, and those retirees are living longer. Finally, the program doesn’t offer younger workers much in return for their money. All of these problems are going to get worse as baby boomers retire.

But there is also an ideological rationale for many conservatives’ support for partial privatization. The idea is to shift the system away from being an intergenerational transfer of income to one based more on private wealth accumulation. This would be easier to square with the notion that people should prepare for predictable life events like retirement themselves rather than relying on the government. In theory, as people derive more of their income from the workings of the free market than from the welfare state, their sympathy for the former will grow at the expense of the latter. More optimistic conservatives hope to replace the redistributive state with a private-wealth-based ownership society, where the New Investor Class would be a lasting

constituency for smaller government.

Under the Bush administration's plan, in exchange for forgoing some traditional Social Security benefits, younger workers would be allowed to set aside 4 percent of their payroll taxes into a personal account that will be invested in a mix of stocks and bonds. There will also be some as yet unspecified changes that will reduce the growth of future benefits from the old system. If a proposal along these lines passes, and if it works as advertised, many conservatives argue it will result in a long-term reduction of the federal government that will outweigh Bush's budget-busting record from his first term.

That record is precisely what should worry conservatives. A transition from a pay-as-you-go system to one where payroll taxes are diverted into personal accounts will require up-front borrowing, something made more problematic by a declining dollar and mounting deficits. But perhaps more significant is the trajectory of previous Bush initiatives.

It's worth noting that two of the largest expansions of the federal government under Bush started out as incremental free-market reforms. The most egregious example is the Medicare prescription-drug benefit. Although it was a good opportunity to burnish his compassionate-conservative credentials, the case for a non-means-tested prescription drug benefit even for seniors with existing coverage never made much fiscal sense. At \$13.3 trillion, Medicare's unfunded liabilities already exceeded Social Security's. Without the new benefit, Medicare spending was still projected to double as a percentage of GDP by 2040.

The original Bush proposal offered prescription drug benefits to seniors who left the Medicare system for competing private-sector plans. The intention was for marketplace competition and managed care to hold down the

costs and place the system in a better position for further reforms later.

The legislation Congress actually passed turned out differently. Seniors could get comparable prescription-drug coverage without leaving traditional Medicare. This reduced the incentive for retirees to obtain private coverage and for insurers in the marketplace to provide it. It also, predictably, raised the costs.

Rather than resist these changes, the Bush administration aggressively lobbied reluctant Republicans to vote for the bill's passage. Instead of working to lower the bill's final price tag, the administration consistently tried to lowball it. Last year, a Department of Health and Human Services inquiry concluded that then Medicare administrator Thomas Scully threatened to fire the program's chief actuary, Richard Foster, if he told Congress the benefit would cost \$500 to \$600 billion over ten years rather than the \$400 billion legislators anticipated.

If only Foster had been right. The *Washington Post* recently reported that the cost over this period would instead be \$750 billion to \$1.2 trillion. According to a Cato Institute study by Joseph Antos and Jagadeesh Gokhale, even this may be too optimistic: "...[M]ore employers than expected may drop retiree drug coverage under their plans; new drugs may be more expensive than assumed; more retirees may enroll in the drug program than assumed; enrollees may demand more drug treatments..." The program's cost estimates have already increased 80 percent in just two years, and the list of possibilities that could make it even more expensive is long. Medicare's projected shortfall between revenues and benefits—already six times larger than Social Security's—continues to rise, and its trust fund will be exhausted in 2019.

Although nowhere nearly as expensive as the Medicare prescription drug benefit, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is

another commonly mentioned example of President Bush advancing big government. During his first term, federal education spending jumped 70 percent. But this law was also originally conceived as a way to nudge education policy away from bureaucratic control in the direction of market competition.

NCLB was supposed to offset increased spending and new federal education standards by allowing for greater choice among parents whose children were in failing schools. The White House initially included private school choice as one of their options. The measure's conservative defenders still point to it as a victory for school choice. Armstrong Williams, for instance, cited his longtime support for vouchers as a reason for accepting money from the Department of Education to promote NCLB.

Yet most of these reforms were removed from the final bill in order to win support from Democrats and moderate Republicans. The version of NCLB that passed did not include vouchers. Critics argue that the limited school choice it does offer doesn't significantly expand educational opportunities for its intended beneficiaries.

"In practice," wrote Lisa Snell in *Reason* last year, "children are offered transfers only to other Title I schools. Since most Title I schools are mediocre performers at best, parents have a choice of schools that are only marginally better. Furthermore, the school districts decide which schools parents will be allowed to 'choose'; often they offer only one or two alternatives."

Both initiatives were sold as compromises. In exchange for some increased spending, they were to encourage competition, promote individual choice, and inject market incentives into moribund federal programs. But in order to clear Congress, further compromises were involved. Many of the elements that made these proposals palatable, if not



desirable, to conservatives ended up being stripped out and legislators ratcheted up spending. Instead of fighting to keep the bills closer to their original goals, the Bush administration accepted Congress' handiwork, declared victory, and held a signing ceremony.

Will Social Security reform be different? Although some conservatives object in principle to any forced savings or investment, many others are energized by what they see as a more ambitious free-market reform proposal than Bush's education and Medicare gambits ever were. What, if anything, could go wrong?

Tyler Cowen, a professor of economics at George Mason University who posts on the Marginal Revolution blog, worries that the combination of transition costs imposed by the personal accounts plus the expense of maintaining a "secondary safety net" in case "anyone's account goes bust" will end up leading to a higher tax burden in the long run. He argues that it would be preferable to institute means-testing, transforming Social Security into "a welfare program for the needy elderly" and allowing private savings and investment to remain a voluntary choice.

Berna Brannon, a Social Security analyst for the Cato Institute, argues that the transition costs really just make explicit unfunded obligations the federal government has already incurred. It is, she maintains, better to pay for some of them now in order to reduce costs over the long term, and she is more optimistic about the transition costs, which she argues are often misunderstood. "The financial markets will likely perceive us to be responsibly owning the problem instead of passing it on to the next generation," Brannon says.

Also worth watching are the details that have been left to Congress. There is still the question of what steps will be taken to restrain future benefit spending beyond individual investment. At the

State of the Union, Bush mentioned cutting benefits on a means-tested basis for affluent retirees, instituting price indexing so cost-of-living adjustments would be tied to inflation rather than wage growth, and raising the retirement age, cleverly quoting a prominent Democrat suggesting each one. But he did not endorse any of them, suggesting he wants Capitol Hill to bite first.

The size of the personal accounts is also still in contention. Many House conservatives want younger workers to be able to invest more than just four percentage points of their payroll taxes. Congressman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has introduced a bill that allows younger workers to divert an average of 6.4 percentage points; Congressman Sam Johnson's (R-Texas) bill would codify Cato's proposal of 6.2 percentage points.

The argument is that larger accounts will allow workers to accumulate bigger nest eggs, reduce their dependency on traditional Social Security benefits by a greater amount, and make it politically more risky for a future Congress ever to try to reduce the accounts. "We're still

hopeful that the account sizes will be bigger," says Brannon. "There is still a lot of wiggle room."

Others have reforms in mind that conservatives will find less to their liking. Key Democrats hope to prop up Social Security by increasing the progressivity of the payroll tax. The idea received bipartisan cover when Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) earlier this year suggested raising the income to which Social Security taxes apply, currently capped at \$90,000. To avoid a filibuster, Republicans may need to secure five Democratic votes for Social Security restructuring. Will free-market reforms again be jettisoned so that Bush can sign a bill?

Social Security reformers nevertheless remain optimistic. "If we end up with personal accounts, with real ownership, and no increase in the payroll tax, any bill will be a step in the right direction," says Brannon. "Individual accounts are essential."

Such benchmarks are also essential to ensure that conservatives don't once again vote for ownership only to get warmed-over welfarism. ■

## How to Destroy a Nation

We're already well underway.

By Richard D. Lamm

I HAVE A SECRET PLAN to destroy America. If you believe, as many do, that America is too smug, too white-bread, too self-satisfied, too rich, let's destroy America. It is not that hard to do. History shows that nations are more fragile than their citizens think: no nation in history has survived the ravages of time. Historian Arnold Toynbee observed that all great civilizations rise and fall and that "an autopsy of history would show

that all great nations commit suicide." Here is my plan:

1. We must first make America a bilingual/bicultural country. History shows that no nation can survive the tension, conflict, and antagonism of two competing languages and cultures. It is a blessing for an individual to be bilingual; it is a curse for a society. One scholar, Seymour Martin Lipset, put it this way:

The histories of bilingual and bicultural societies that do not assimilate are histories of turmoil, tension, and tragedy. Canada, Belgium, Malaysia, and Lebanon—all face crises of national existence in which minorities press for autonomy, if not independence. Pakistan and Cyprus have divided. Nigeria suppressed an ethnic rebellion. France faces difficulties with its Basques, Bretons, and Corsicans.

Some think that Switzerland is an example of a bilingual country that works. Don't disabuse them of this idea. Don't for a minute point out to them that the Swiss divided their country into distinct linguistic areas, German, French, Italian, and Romansch. Let them ignore Emmanuel Kant's warning that "language is the great divider" of human history.

2. I would invent multiculturalism and encourage immigrants to maintain their own cultures. I would make it an article of belief that all cultures are equal, that there are no cultural differences that are important. I would declare it an article of faith that the black and Hispanic dropout rate is only due to prejudice and discrimination by the majority. Every other explanation is out-of-bounds.

3. We can make the United States a "Hispanic Quebec" without much effort. The key is to celebrate diversity rather than unity. As Benjamin Schwarz said in *The Atlantic* recently:

...[T]he apparent success of our own multiethnic and multicultural experiment might have been achieved not by tolerance but by hegemony. Without the dominance that once dictated ethnocentrically, and what it meant to be an American, we are left with only tolerance and pluralism to hold us together.

I would encourage all immigrants to keep their own languages and cultures and I would replace the melting-pot metaphor with a salad-bowl metaphor. It is important to ensure that we have various cultural sub-groups living in America reinforcing their differences, rather than Americans emphasizing their similarities.

4. Having done all this, I would make our fastest growing demographic group the least educated—I would add a second underclass, unassimilated, undereducated, and antagonistic to the majority population. I would allow our immigration patterns to take 50 percent of our immigrant stream from Spanish-speaking countries, and I would have this new second underclass have a 50 percent dropout rate from school. Furthermore, I would radicalize them with dreams of "Aztlán" and re-conquering the American Southwest.

5. I would then get foundations and big business to give these efforts lots of money. I would invest in ethnic identity, and I would establish the cult of victimology. I would get all minorities to think that their lack of success was all the fault of the majority by starting a grievance industry blaming all minority failure on the majority population.

6. I would establish dual citizenship and promote divided loyalties. I would "celebrate diversity." Diversity is a wonderfully seductive word. It stresses differences rather than commonalities. Diverse people worldwide are mostly engaged in hating each other—that is, when they are not killing each other. A diverse, peaceful, or stable society is against most historical precedent. People undervalue the unity it takes to keep a nation together, and we can take advantage of this myopia. Look at the ancient Greeks. Dorf's *World History* tells us:

The Greeks believed that they belonged to the same race; they possessed a common language and literature; and they worshiped the same gods. All Greece took part in the Olympic games in honor of Zeus and all Greeks venerated the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. A common enemy Persia threatened their liberty. Yet, all of these bonds together were not strong enough to overcome two factors ... (local patriotism and geographical conditions that nurtured political divisions ...)

If we can put the emphasis on the "pluribus," instead of the "unum," we can balkanize America as surely as Kosovo.

7. Then I would place all these sensitive subjects off limits—make them taboo to talk about. I would find a word similar to "heretic" in the 16th century that stopped discussion and paralyzed thinking. Words like "racist" and "xenophobe" should serve the same purpose: halt argument and even conversation.

Having made America a bilingual/bicultural country, having established multiculturalism, having the large foundations fund the doctrine of victimology I would next make it impossible to enforce our immigration laws. I would develop a mantra: "because immigration has been good for America, it must always be good." I would make every individual immigrant sympatric and ignore the cumulative impact.

Note: Please keep this plan confidential. America could still wake up. ■

*Richard D. Lamm was a three-term governor of Colorado. A variation of this essay was delivered at the annual dinner of the Federation for American-Immigration Reform.*

# Libertarianism: A Home for Conservatives?

## Marxism of the Right

By Robert Locke

Free spirits, the ambitious, ex-socialists, drug users, and sexual eccentrics often find an attractive political philosophy in libertarianism, the idea that individual freedom should be the sole rule of ethics and government. Libertarianism offers its believers a clear conscience to do things society presently restrains, like make more money, have more sex, or take more drugs. It promises a consistent formula for ethics, a rigorous framework for policy analysis, a foundation in American history, and the application of capitalist efficiencies to the whole of society. But while it contains substantial grains of truth, as a whole it is a seductive mistake.

There are many varieties of libertarianism, from natural-law libertarianism (the least crazy) to anarcho-capitalism (the most), and some varieties avoid some of the criticisms below. But many are still subject to most of them, and some of the more successful varieties—I recently heard a respected pundit insist that classical liberalism is libertarianism—enter a gray area where it is not really clear that they are libertarians at all. But because 95 percent of the libertarianism one encounters at cocktail parties, on editorial pages, and on Capitol Hill is a kind of commonplace “street” libertarianism, I decline to allow libertarians the sophisticated trick of using a vulgar libertarianism to agitate for what they want by defending a refined version of their doctrine when challenged philosophically. We’ve seen Marxists pull that before.

This is no surprise, as libertarianism is basically the Marxism of the Right. If Marxism is the delusion that one can run society purely on altruism and collectivism, then libertarianism is the mirror-image delusion that one can run it purely on selfishness and individualism. Society in fact requires both individualism and collectivism, both selfishness and altruism, to function. Like Marxism, libertarianism offers the fraudulent intellectual security of a complete *a priori* account of the political good without the effort of empirical investigation. Like Marxism, it aspires, overtly or covertly, to reduce social life to economics.

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## In Defense of Freedom

By Daniel McCarthy

Arthur Schopenhauer once wrote a marvelously cynical manual of eristics called *The Art of Always Being Right*. The philosopher advised his readers against resort to logic; *ad hominem* attacks and other plays upon the passions could be much more effective. Put the opponent’s argument in some odious category, he urged.

Conservatives are long accustomed to residing in such a category: as their enemies would have it, conservatism is the ideology of the rich, the racist, and the illiterate. That this caricature bears no resemblance at all to the philosophy and social thought of Edmund Burke or Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver or Robert Nisbet, is irrelevant. The stereotype endures not because it is true but because it is useful.

Sadly, a few conservatives seem to have learned nothing from their experience at the hands of the Left and are no less quick to present an ill-informed and malicious caricature of libertarians than leftists are to give a similarly distorted interpretation of conservatism. Rather than addressing the arguments of libertarians, these polemicists slander their foes as hedonists or Nietzscheans. In fact, there are libertine libertarians, just as there are affluent and bigoted conservatives. But libertinism itself is as distinct from libertarianism as worship of Mammon or hatred of blacks is distinct from conservatism.

Libertarianism is a political philosophy, not a complete system of ethics or metaphysics. Political philosophies address specifically the state and, more generally, justice in human society. The distinguishing characteristic of libertarianism is that it applies to the state the same ethical rules that apply to everyone else. Given that murder and theft are wrong—views not unique to libertarianism, of course—the libertarian contends that the state, which is to say those individuals who purport to act in the name of the common good, has no more right to seize the property of others, beat them, conscript them, or otherwise harm them than any other institution or individual has. Beyond this, libertarianism says only that a society without institutionalized violence can indeed exist and even thrive.

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# Marxism of the Right

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And like Marxism, it has its historical myths and a genius for making its followers feel like an elect unbound by the moral rules of their society.

The most fundamental problem with libertarianism is very simple: freedom, though a good thing, is simply not the only good thing in life. Simple physical security, which even a prisoner can possess, is not freedom, but one cannot live without it. Prosperity is connected to freedom, in that it makes us free to consume, but it is not the same thing, in that one can be rich but as unfree as a Victorian tycoon's wife. A family is in fact one of the least free things imaginable, as the emotional satisfactions of it derive from relations that we are either born into without choice or, once they are chosen, entail obligations that we cannot walk away from with ease or justice. But security, prosperity, and family are in fact the bulk of happiness for most real people and the principal issues that concern governments.

Libertarians try to get around this fact that freedom is not the only good thing by trying to reduce all other goods to it through the concept of choice, claiming that everything that is good is so because we choose to partake of it. Therefore freedom, by giving us choice, supposedly embraces all other goods. But this violates common sense by denying that anything is good by nature, independently of whether we choose it. Nourishing foods are good for us by nature, not because we choose to eat them. Taken to its logical conclusion, the reduction of the good to the freely chosen means there are no inherently good or bad choices at all, but that a man who chose to spend his life playing tiddlywinks has lived as worthy a life as a Washington or a Churchill.

Furthermore, the reduction of all goods to individual choices presupposes that all goods are individual. But some, like national security, clean air, or a healthy culture, are inherently collective. It may be possible to privatize some, but only some, and the efforts can be comically inefficient. Do you really want to trace every pollutant in the air back to the factory that emitted it and sue?

Libertarians rightly concede that one's freedom must end at the point at which it starts to impinge upon another person's, but they radically underestimate how easily this happens. So even if the libertarian principle of "an it harm none, do as thou wilt," is true, it does not license the behavior libertarians claim. Consider pornography: libertarians say it should be permitted because if someone doesn't like it, he can choose not to view it. But what he can't do is choose not to live in a culture that has been vulgarized by it.

Libertarians in real life rarely live up to their own theory but tend to indulge in the pleasant parts while declining to live up to the difficult portions. They flout the drug laws but continue to collect government benefits they consider illegitimate. This is not just an accidental failing of libertarianism's believers but an intrinsic temptation of the doctrine that sets it up to fail whenever tried, just like Marxism.

Libertarians need to be asked some hard questions. What if a free society needed to draft its citizens in order to remain free? What if it needed to limit oil imports to protect the economic freedom of its citizens from

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unfriendly foreigners? What if it needed to force its citizens to become sufficiently educated to sustain a free society? What if it needed to deprive landowners of the freedom to refuse to sell their property as a precondition for giving everyone freedom of movement on highways? What if it needed to deprive citizens of the freedom to import cheap foreign labor in order to keep out poor foreigners who would vote for socialistic wealth redistribution?

In each of these cases, less freedom today is the price of more tomorrow. Total freedom today would just be a way of running down accumulated social capital and storing up problems for the future. So even if libertarianism is true in some ultimate sense, this does not prove that the libertarian policy choice is the right one today on any particular question.

Furthermore, if limiting freedom today may prolong it tomorrow, then limiting freedom tomorrow may prolong it the day after and so on, so the right amount of freedom may in fact be limited freedom in perpetuity. But if limited freedom is the right choice, then libertarianism, which makes freedom an absolute, is simply wrong. If all we want is limited freedom, then mere liberalism will do, or even better, a Burkean conservatism that reveres traditional liberties. There is no need to embrace outright libertarianism just because we want a healthy portion of freedom, and the alternative to libertarianism is not the USSR, it is America's traditional liberties.

Libertarianism's abstract and absolutist view of freedom leads to bizarre conclusions. Like slavery, libertarianism would have to allow one to sell oneself into it. (It has been possible at certain times in history to do just that by assuming debts one could not repay.) And libertarianism degenerates into outright idiocy when confronted with the problem of children, whom it treats like adults, supporting the abolition of compulsory education and all child-specific laws, like those against child labor and child sex. It likewise cannot handle the insane and the senile.

Libertarians argue that radical permissiveness, like legalizing drugs, would not shred a libertarian society because drug users who caused trouble would be disciplined by the threat of losing their jobs or homes if current laws that make it difficult to fire or evict people were abolished. They claim a "natural order" of reasonable behavior would emerge. But there is no actual empirical proof that this would happen. Furthermore, this means libertarianism is an all-or-nothing proposition: if society continues to protect people from the consequences of their actions in any way, libertarianism regarding specific freedoms is illegitimate. And since society does so protect people, libertarianism is an illegitimate moral position until the Great Libertarian Revolution has occurred.

And is society really wrong to protect people against the negative consequences of some of their free choices? While it is obviously fair to let people enjoy the benefits of their wise choices and suffer the costs of their stupid ones, decent societies set limits on both these outcomes. People are allowed to become millionaires, but they are taxed. They are allowed to go broke, but they are not then forced to starve. They are deprived

of the most extreme benefits of freedom in order to spare us the most extreme costs. The libertopian alternative would be perhaps a more glittering society, but also a crueler one.

Empirically, most people don't actually want absolute freedom, which is why democracies don't elect libertarian governments. Irony of ironies, people don't choose absolute freedom. But this refutes libertarianism by its own premise, as libertarianism defines the good as the freely chosen, yet people do not choose it. Paradoxically, people exercise their freedom not to be libertarians.

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The political corollary of this is that since no electorate will support libertarianism, a libertarian government could never be achieved democratically but would have to be imposed by some kind of authoritarian state, which rather puts the lie to libertarians' claim that under any other philosophy, busybodies who claim to know what's best for other people impose their values on the rest of us. Libertarianism itself is based on the conviction that it is the one true political philosophy and all others are false. It entails imposing a certain kind of society, with all its attendant pluses and minuses, which the inhabitants thereof will not be free to opt out of except by leaving.

And if libertarians ever do acquire power, we may expect a farrago of bizarre policies. Many support abolition of government-issued money in favor of that minted by private banks. But this has already been tried, in various epochs, and doesn't lead to any wonderful paradise of freedom but only to an explosion of fraud and currency debasement followed by the concentration of financial power in those few banks that survive the inevitable shaking-out. Many other libertarian schemes similarly founder on the empirical record.

A major reason for this is that libertarianism has a

naïve view of economics that seems to have stopped paying attention to the actual history of capitalism around 1880. There is not the space here to refute simplistic *laissez faire*, but note for now that the second-richest nation in the world, Japan, has one of the most regulated economies, while nations in which government has essentially lost control over economic life, like Russia, are hardly economic paradises. Legitimate criticism of over-regulation does not entail going to the opposite extreme.

Libertarian naïveté extends to politics. They often confuse the absence of government impingement upon freedom with freedom as such. But without a sufficiently strong state, individual freedom falls prey to other more powerful individuals. A weak state and a freedom-respecting state are not the same thing, as shown by many a chaotic Third-World tyranny.

Libertarians are also naïve about the range and perversity of human desires they propose to unleash. They can imagine nothing more threatening than a bit of Sunday-afternoon sadomasochism, followed by some recreational drug use and work on Monday. They assume that if people are given freedom, they will gravitate towards essentially bourgeois lives, but this takes for granted things like the deferral of gratification that were pounded into them as children without their being free to refuse. They forget that for much of the population, preaching maximum freedom merely results in drunkenness, drugs, failure to hold a job, and pregnancy out of wedlock. Society is dependent upon inculcated self-restraint if it is not to slide into barbarism, and libertarians attack this self-restraint. Ironically, this often results in internal restraints being replaced by the external restraints of police and prison, resulting in less freedom, not more.

This contempt for self-restraint is emblematic of a deeper problem: libertarianism has a lot to say about freedom but little about learning to handle it. Freedom without judgment is dangerous at best, useless at worst. Yet libertarianism is philosophically incapable of evolving a theory of how to use freedom well because of its root dogma that all free choices are equal, which it cannot abandon except at the cost of admitting that there are other goods than freedom. Conservatives should know better. ■

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*Robert Locke writes from New York City.*

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## In Defense of Freedom

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For some exceptionally Christ-like people no demonstration of feasibility is needed. Doing what is right is enough, regardless of whether it brings wealth or happiness or even daily bread. But most people are not like that; they want security and prosperity—they ask, not unreasonably, not only “is it right?” but “can it work?” Following upon this is a tendency to deny that necessary evils are evils at all. Yes, the state seizes tax money and jails those who do not pay, actions that would be denounced as gangsterism if undertaken by a private organization. But if the only way life can go on is to have the government provide defense and other necessities, such expropriations might have to be called something other than robbery.

Moderate libertarians say just that. They propose that the state should do those necessary things that it alone can do—and only those things. Radical libertarians contend there is nothing good that only the state can provide—even its seemingly essential functions are better served by the market and voluntary institutions. The differences between thoroughgoing libertarians and moderates are profound, but the immediate prescriptions of each are similar enough: cut taxes, slash spending, no more foreign adventurism.

Discovering just which functions of government are necessary, or showing how life can be led in the absence of institutional coercion altogether, is no easy task. Any power that the state assumes typically comes to be seen in retrospect as absolutely essential. America long got by well without a Federal Reserve or a Food and Drug Administration, yet today it is almost unthinkable that they could be abolished. Coercive and grandiose statist solutions to problems real or imagined have the effect of crowding out voluntary approaches, so that sooner or later the government fix comes to seem the only one. Even the most statist conservative in America today does not call for nationalizing health care. Yet in every country in which a national health service is a *fait accompli*, conservatives do not dream of abolishing it—certainly Britain’s Tories, even under Thatcher, did not. The public in such countries



takes socialized medicine for granted; the alternative is practically pre-civilized.

Once, conservatives really did intend to repeal the New Deal. Now a Republican president talks about saving Social Security—albeit with a phony “privatization” plan—as if society would collapse in the absence of mandatory savings or government social insurance. Conservatives complain about the media’s erstwhile tendency to label Soviet hardliners as Russian “conservatives,” but it’s hard to escape the conclusion that if Communism were a government program, the Republican Party would be trying to save it, too. Consider the about-face that conservatives in this country have pulled with respect to the Department of Education—one could name other departments as well—which once was targeted for elimination and now is funded more generously than ever.

Economics is of some help here, showing both that government is not necessary for prosperity and that in fact state intervention into the free market hurts the very people it’s supposed to help. Rent control makes affordable apartments scarce. The minimum wage exacerbates unemployment. And a basic law of economics is that you get more of what you subsidize: doles encourage unemployment. Economics suggests ways in which services now provided poorly and counterproductively by government can be made available without coercion.

The limits of this are worth keeping in mind, however, and are kept in mind by libertarians. Economics is not psychology; study of production and exchange does not tell a person what he should buy. Relative valuation of goods—without which there can be no economics, since exchange only takes place when each party values what the other is offering more than what he himself is selling—does not imply a relativistic ethics. The ethical assumption of libertarianism—that it is wrong to murder and steal—is absolute, and other values may be absolute as well.

Libertarians are not wholly dependent on economics to show how freedom works, however. From Lord Acton onward, libertarians have taken a keen interest in history, and noncoercive institutions have a long established empirical record. Conservatives should be aware of the evidence. Over the past 200 years the power of the state has grown exponentially: in earlier eras private initiative and civil society provided most of the goods that the state now pretends to supply.

Indeed, as libertarian historian-theorists have noted, as state power grows so civil society proportionally diminishes. Before Social Security, families and churches cared for the elderly. Now it is easier for young people to forget their parents and grandparents in old age; let the government take care of them. Social networks decay when they aren’t used, and the state crowds out civil society.

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**“Government is nobody’s parent, and the idea that President Bush would be in any sense the father of citizens who are wiser and more just than he is perversion.”**

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There is something rather counterintuitive—or just plain nonsensical—to the belief that bureaucrats and politicians care more about the elderly than families and communities do. The same holds true for the notion that the state upholds the interests of children. No, libertarians do not want to see youngsters emancipated from their parents. The family is natural and is not upheld, even allowing for corporal punishment, primarily by force. The power of state over individual and society, on the other hand, is rather different. Government is nobody’s parent, and the idea that President Bush would be in any sense the father of citizens who are wiser and more just than he is perversion. When the state treats adults as children, infantilizing its subjects, the more prudent and older becomes subservient to the more reckless and younger, for society antedates the state.

Social conservatives have long faced an apparent paradox. No matter how Christian the president and members of his party claim to be, no matter how many “solid” conservatives are elected Congress, the fabric of the social order continues to fray. At some point the question must be asked, is this because there still aren’t enough good people in government?—how many would ever be enough? Or is it because the state by nature, far from buttressing the organs of civilization and the way of life dear to conservatives, instead undermines those very things? As Albert Jay Nock once observed, sending in good people to reform the state is like sending in virgins to reform the whorehouse.

The free market sometimes involves things that conservatives dislike, such as pornography. What should be considered here, however, is not how the market performs relative to some idealized abstraction of the state run by wise and pure censors, but how a specific market compares to a particular state. If there is a market for pornography there is sure to be a constituency for it, too. Moreover, the state produces far worse depravities of its own: *Playboy* may be bad, but one is not forced to subsidize it, unlike public-school sex ed, Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ" (funded by the National Endowment for the Arts), and Lynndie England's S&M jamboree with Iraqi prisoners of war. One can avoid pornography on the market, but everyone pays for the depravities of the political class.

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**"As the scope of the state has grown, patriotism has degenerated into warmongering and religion has succumbed to politicization."**

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That is not about to change. The state, since it acts by compulsion, cannot inculcate real virtue in anyone but only a hypocritical and ersatz kind. One can compel action but not belief. No wonder then that as the scope of the state has grown, patriotism has degenerated into warmongering and religion has succumbed to politicization and scandal. The moral muscles atrophy in the absence of personal responsibility. That some self-identified conservatives cannot seem to tell the difference between self-responsibility and compulsion, or between the standards of civil society and those of the state, demonstrates just how thorough the process of crowding out genuine virtue with the coercive counterfeit actually is.

Consider the involvement of the state in marriage. Presently the state defines marriage for all, and there is considerable angst among traditionalists that government will redefine the institution to include homosexual unions. This concern is not misplaced: if gay marriage is given state sanction, the force of law will support demands by wedded homosexuals to receive the same privileges from civil society—including churches and religious charities—that married heterosexuals receive. In the absence of state involvement in marriage and in telling businesses and nonprofit organizations whom they can hire, however, individuals, churches, and businesses could make up their own minds

as to which marriages they considered legitimate and could act accordingly.

This is not a matter of imposing on anyone; libertarianism allows different standards to prevail in different places rather than dragging everyone down to the level of the state. The libertarian rests content to let Utah be Utah and San Francisco be San Francisco—and to let Iraq be Iraq. If the property owners of a neighborhood wanted to establish a certain set of common moral standards, they could do so. Other places could do differently. Libertarianism thus responds to the reality of difference, including profound cultural and religious difference, much better than other political philosophies, which are left trying to smash square pegs into round holes.

Libertarian societies in all their variety would not be utopias, of course. Libertarianism does not propose an end to evil or even to coercion, but only the flourishing of civilization in the absence of institutionalized coercion. Crime would not disappear, poor taste would still exist, and even conservative communities would remain beset with imperfection. Removing the privileges of the state would make these evils smaller, less centralized, and more manageable, however. This picture is no abstraction or economic construct; it arises from the practice of actual institutions. The record of civil society and the free market is as old as the human race.

The libertarian idea of society would hold true even if a degree of coercion were absolutely necessary and ineradicable: the more authority residing in civil society rather than the state, the better. But there are at least a few *prima facie* considerations that lend weight to so-called radical libertarianism. The most widely agreed upon of all so-called public goods, national defense, is not what it seems. The mightiest military on earth failed to prevent the atrocity on 9/11. On the contrary, U.S. interference in the Middle East and support for thuggish regimes has endangered Americans. Is a country ripe for invasion without a standing army? The last 200-odd years have shown many instances, including our own Revolutionary War, where guerrilla forces have been more effective than regular armies. Nor is there any need for conscription when people want to defend their homes; conscription is what states need to make people fight for causes in which they don't believe.

A libertarian order is not coming any time soon, but it should be plain to anyone who undertakes the investigation that the solution to war, bureaucracy, taxation, personal irresponsibility, and the rot of culture is not more government, it's less. ■

# Church of the Open Sky

A lifelong surfer on the endless quest for that perfect wave

By Roger D. McGrath

SURFING IS NOT A SPORT. Surfing is a way of life. There are no rules in surfing, no playing field or court with defined limits or boundaries. Surfing is free, natural, individualistic. The phrase “surfing contest” is an oxymoron: competition requires definition, structure, rules, governing bodies, man-made schedules, standards—everything that is the antithesis of surfing.

At best, surfing is an almost holy communion with nature. At worst, it is the ultimate hedonistic indulgence. Ask anyone who has ever surfed under ideal conditions—sizable, well-shaped waves; glassy surface; blue sky; warm air and sea temperatures; uncrowded waters—and they will tell you what “stoked” means.

Surfing under perfect conditions brands the soul with an experience so powerful and sensual and yet so sublime that one is never the same again. Some are left psychically crippled, ever searching for the right combination of conditions and letting the rest of life slip by. Drug addiction pales in comparison. If you think I’m kidding, or you simply don’t believe me, all I can say is—you haven’t been there.

In 1989, the media made a great hullabaloo over a survey taken of surfers. One of the survey questions asked whether they would rather surf or have sex. 83 percent of the surfers answered that they would rather surf. The media were astounded and widely publicized the findings. The surfers were

astounded too—and embarrassed. They even questioned the accuracy of the survey. They could not believe that 17 percent of surfers would rather have sex.

The only surprise I got from the survey was the continued high state of surf stoke despite horribly crowded waters. One of the essentials for the perfect day is more waves than surfers. Sharing a wave, unless it is with a buddy who anticipates your every move and you his, destroys the experience. The essence of riding a wave involves working harmoniously with it, doing what the wave suggests and taking advantage of its critical portion. This can usually only be done when riding the wave alone.

The great difference between surfing and, say, skiing is the dynamism of a wave versus the static nature of a mountain slope. The slope remains in place. The wave moves through the water and is likely to change as it moves, speeding or slowing, improving its shape or turning sloppy, suddenly breaking or backing off, crashing with power or gently feathering. There’s nothing like it.

Reared in Pacific Palisades, I was a water puppy as a young child. I would hang onto my big brother’s back as he swam through the waves and beyond the surf line. With a grunt, he would then heave me into the air and I would splash down a few feet away; I quickly became a proficient dog paddler. As I got a bit older, I learned the basic swimming

strokes. I started body surfing before I started school. Several of my friends had taken to the waves also, and by the time we were in the third or fourth grade we would have walked barefoot over hot coals to get to the beach when the surf was up.

Some of our older brothers were surfing with boards, but that took money. A good balsa board—that’s what surfboards were made of in the mid-’50s—cost \$100, an impossible sum for young kids in those years. The closest we could come to boards were short canvas surf mats with vulcanized rubber ends that we filled with air until they were rock hard and on the verge of bursting. I could actually knee paddle my mat like a surfboard, and by the time I was 10 or 11, I was riding my bicycle with my deflated and folded mat up the coast highway to Malibu. I filled it at a gas station near the pier and then paddled out to the point. The big guys, sitting on their surfboards and waiting for waves, looked at me curiously and indulgently. I would catch the smaller waves and the leftovers from the sets.

I can remember my first wave at Malibu. It boggled my mind. The shape was perfect, as if made by some great machine, and it seemed to go on forever. I was accustomed to much shorter and often lumpy, bumpy rides. To this day I have never surfed a better wave than a Malibu wave. I’ve surfed all up and down the California coast. I’ve surfed in Mexico. I’ve surfed in Hawaii. I’ve surfed

in Australia. I've surfed bigger waves. I've surfed faster waves. I've surfed waves that provided for longer rides. But I have never surfed better waves. When conditions are right at Malibu, there is no better wave on planet earth.

Malibu is a freak of nature. To the uninformed eye it looks like any other point of land jutting into the ocean. But the bottom is perfectly contoured with a reef of rocks so uniform in size and

began to delaminate—the process of the fiberglass pulling away from the foam, a not infrequent problem with the first foam boards—Kemp parked the board on the side of the house and, with enough pleading, Denny and I persuaded him to let us use it.

The Velzy-Jacobs was 9'6," an ideal size for Kemp but a giant for us two little gremmies. Denny would grab the nose and I'd grab the tail and we would carry

features, and the physique of a Greek statue, he was a striking figure. He was also the principal figure in the revival of surfing in the Hawaiian Islands.

Once the sport of Hawaiian royalty, surfing had all but disappeared in the islands by the turn of the 20th century. The few who surfed did so lying prone on the board and rode the breaking wave straight into the beach. Freeth not only began standing on the board but also developed the art of turning the board to slide down the wave and stay ahead of the break. On a trip to Hawaii, Jack London saw Freeth surf. "Half a mile out where the reef is," said London, "the white-headed combers thrust suddenly skyward out of the placid turquoise-blue, one after another they come, a mile long, with smoking crests, the white battalions of the infinite army of the sea. And suddenly rising like a sea-god from out of the churning white appears a man standing above them all, calm and superb. He is a brown Mercury riding the sea that roars and bellows and cannot shake him from its back."

In 1907, Freeth was brought from the islands to California by Henry E. Huntington of the Pacific Electric Railway. A new line had just been opened from Los Angeles to Redondo Beach, and Huntington thought surfing exhibitions by Freeth might be just the promotional tool the railway needed to attract new riders. Soon Angelinos were taking the train to Redondo and watching from the beach, as one newspaper reported, "in awe and amazement, witnessing the spectacle of a man **STANDING** on water." Truth be told, Freeth was standing on an eight-foot, 125-pound redwood board.

Freeth remained in California, working as a sports trainer and a lifeguard, becoming the first official lifeguard on the Pacific Coast. He invented the torpedo-shaped rescue buoy that became

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shape and so geometrically arranged that it seems impossible that it developed naturally. At an extreme minus tide with most of the reef exposed, the rocks look like marbles on a Chinese checkers' board. Every other reef I've ever seen has the big rock—to avoid—halfway down the point or a gap in the reef or groups of jagged rocks distributed randomly. Not Malibu. The rocks are smooth and round, looking like moss-covered bowling balls.

A couple of weeks after I turned 12, I finally got the use of a surfboard. It belonged to Kemp Aaberg—the big brother of my childhood best buddy, Denny Aaberg—who years later wrote the screenplay for the movie *Big Wednesday*. Kemp was one of L.A. city's outstanding high-school pole-vaulters and might have gone on to greatness had not the siren call of breaking waves at Malibu gotten the better of him. Lean, wiry, well conditioned, and highly coordinated, by the time he was 18 he was one of the best surfers in southern California. Dale Velzy and Hap Jacobs, surfboard makers in Hermosa Beach, gave Kemp boards to ride. When one of them

the board to the water. Since our combined bodyweight no more than equaled Kemp's, the board floated the two of us and we were able to tandem knee paddle out to the point. When a wave came, one of us would slip off the board and tread water while the other surfed. We both stood up and rode the first waves we caught all the way to the shore. We were good athletes and had been body surfing, surf matting, and skate boarding for years. We were also a little bit nuts. We had made a regular practice of attempting ever more radical maneuvers—on a skateboard, Flexy Flyer, bicycle, or pogo stick, or in a soap-box racer. We didn't know it at the time, but we were adrenaline junkies.

Nor did we understand that we had joined a fraternity of surfers that stretched back only 50 years in California. Now, nearly 50 years later and having gained some perspective, I understand how new the sport was at the time.

California's first surfer was George Freeth. Born in Honolulu in 1883, he was part Hawaiian but mostly Irish. With blue eyes, wavy brown hair, chiseled



standard issue for lifeguards the world over and made a number of daring rescues. During a tremendous storm in December 1908, according to one report, Freeth made “three freezing trips out through mountainous, foaming seas to rescue seven Japanese fishermen who were being swept to certain death in their small fishing boats.” The report erred slightly. It was one capsized boat and six fishermen. For his heroic action Freeth was awarded the United States Life Saving Corps Gold Medal. The Japanese fishermen honored him by naming their small fishing village, located at the mouth of Portero Canyon in the Palisades, Freeth.

Freeth also introduced the game of water polo to California and trained several champion swimmers and divers at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Ironically, the daring waterman died in bed at the age of 35, becoming just one more victim of the great influenza epidemic of 1918-19.

Surfboards remained unchanged from Freeth’s day until the late 1920s when Tom Blake introduced several revolutionary innovations. Born in Wisconsin in 1902, Blake rode the rails to California in 1919, arriving about the time Freeth died. Already a terrific swimmer with a muscular build, Blake settled in Santa Monica and worked as a lifeguard, swimming instructor, and stunt man for the movies. He moved to Hawaii for a time, working with the Waikiki Beach Patrol. He fell out of favor with the Hawaiians, however, when he destroyed the field in the Ala Wai Canal paddleboard race. Blake credited his victory to his new hollow paddleboard that he had designed. Instead of the typical solid wood board, Blake’s was hollow, with thin sheets of plywood covering spars, as in the wing of an airplane. The new creation weighed in at 75 pounds, a savings of 50 pounds or more over the older boards.

Blake returned to California and introduced his “Hollow Hawaiian Surfboard” at what was promoted as the “First Pacific Coast Surf Board Championship,” held in August 1928 at Corona Del Mar. Although few waves of any size and quality break there today because of the extension of the Newport Harbor jetty, “Big Corona” was one of California’s premier surf breaks. Blake’s lighter, hollow board caught on quickly. In 1935, he added a skag, a fin attached to the bottom of the board that allowed a surfer to track, turn, and pivot the board with much greater ease. It also greatly increased lateral stability.

With the introduction of Blake’s new board, surfing grew rapidly during the 1930s. Promoters saw a chance to make money, and a very mild and limited commercialization of the sport began. Soon there was a state championship held at San Onofre. Pete Peterson of Santa Monica dominated the event, winning the championship four times. Cliff Tucker, who won the championship in 1940, called Peterson “the greatest waterman on the West Coast in those days. ... [H]e was the best and maybe Loren Harrison was second best. I was

War II, Uncle Sam threw California surfers into the armed forces. The state championship was cancelled for the duration of the war. Perfect, glassy waves broke up and down the coast with very few to ride them. Joe Quigg, who became a surfboard designer and boat builder, recalled the summer of 1944, “I was in the Navy during the war, and I came home to Santa Monica on leave that year. Right after I got home, I drove up to Malibu to surf, and though the waves were good that day, there were only three guys out. One was a guy with a withered arm named Bob Simmons, and the other two were kids named Buzzy Trent and Matt Kivlin.”

The voluble Buzzy Trent went on to become one of the pioneer big-wave riders in Hawaii during the 1950s and a crowd pleaser in surfing movies. Matt Kivlin became an architect in Malibu. Bob Simmons, the guy with the withered arm—actually a badly broken arm that never healed correctly—contributed to the foam revolution of the 1950s.

Surfers called Simmons the mad scientist. He always seemed to be experimenting with something. He took

WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF BLAKE’S NEW BOARD, **SURFING GREW RAPIDLY** DURING THE 1930S. **PROMOTERS SAW A CHANCE TO MAKE MONEY**, AND A VERY MILD AND LIMITED **COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE SPORT** BEGAN.

hot one year and beat ‘em both, but I was just lucky.” The Loren Harrison whom Tucker mentions became well known to television viewers during the 1990s for doing SUV ads on the beach and surfing. In his mid-70s he still had the body of a well-conditioned 30-year-old.

When the Japanese perpetrated their sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, throwing the United States into World

classes at Cal Tech to learn everything he could about aerodynamics and hydrodynamics. His sidekick was the muscular and tough-as-nails Trent. Simmons and Trent were the original odd couple, said Dave Rochlen, a Santa Monica surfer and World War II Marine. “Together, they were a real pair—like the mad scientist and his big, burly sidekick Igor.”

During the late 1940s, most surfboard makers began to use balsa wood imported from South America for surfboards. The wood was light, could be shaped with saws and sanders, and could be covered with fiberglass for protection. It was, however, fairly expensive. Simmons began to look at materials developed during the war, especially Styrofoam. It was easy to shape, very light, and cheap. When he tried to fiberglass the Styrofoam, though, he learned that the catalyzed resin dissolved the foam. In response, he developed his "sandwich board" by covering the Styrofoam with two thin sheets of plywood, using balsa wood for the rails and then fiberglassing the whole thing.

Simmons's new sandwich board worked so well that he soon had dozens of orders and opened a shop in Santa Monica. With Joe Quigg and Matt Kivlin working for him, Simmons turned out hundreds of boards, both sandwich style and balsa. Despite his partially crippled arm, Simmons was continually testing his boards. On a big September day in 1954, he was out at Windansea, La Jolla's best surfing spot. Surfers remembered seeing him riding some big waves that day, but no one remembered seeing him come in. Three days later his body washed up on the beach. The mad scientist was 35 years old, the same age as Freeth when he died.

Simmons did not live quite long enough to see the development of a foam that could withstand catalyzed resin. The breakthrough came from another surfboard maker with an affinity for experimentation, Dave Sweet. Working mostly in garages and then in a small shop in Santa Monica, and after several minor explosions and many missteps, Sweet finally succeeded in molding a polyurethane foam blank that could be shaped and fiberglassed. Nearly at the same time, Gordon "Grubby" Clark and Hobie Alter were

working on their own version of polyurethane foam for surfboards at their shop in Laguna Beach. Although they succeeded in producing foam blanks for surfboards a bit after Sweet, they were enthusiastic promoters of their product and began selling raw blanks to other board makers, first by the dozens, then the hundreds, and finally the thousands. The foam revolution was on. Boards were suddenly not only much lighter but also cheaper.

When I first surfed at Malibu on my canvas mat during 1957 and 1958, balsa boards were common. By 1959 they had become uncommon and were on their way to becoming classics. By that summer I had finally saved enough money to buy my own board. Denny and I spent every day we could surfing, and my face got so sunburned that I came down with sun poisoning. My nose peeled until the bone was nearly exposed. I started to develop "surf bumps" on my feet and upper tibias from knee paddling. But the waves kept breaking and I was stoked.

Several surfers rode the waves as stunt doubles in Hollywood's first feature-length film about surfing, *Gidget*. Released in 1959 and loosely based on some of the characters surfing at Malibu in the late-'50s, the movie spawned interest in surfing all across the nation and alerted many to the commercial possibilities of the sport. Doug McClure, a neighbor who was friends with my brother and had a crush on my sister, played the fun-loving character "Waikiki." We all rushed to the movie to see Doug and all the stunt doubles we knew, not knowing that the movie would mark the beginning of the end of the golden era.

Also in 1959, a surfing contest was held at Huntington Beach that was billed as the first annual West Coast Surfing Championships. Other contests sprang up everywhere, and suddenly surfing was looking more like what everybody had run to the beach to get away from. Some big names boycotted the contests. Mickey Dora surfed in a Malibu contest only to protest what was being done to

THE LATE 1950S AND EARLY 1960S WERE A **GOLDEN ERA FOR SURFING IN CALIFORNIA. THE CROWDS HADN'T YET BECOME UNBEARABLE AND THERE WERE STILL SURFING SPOTS TO BE DISCOVERED.**

The late 1950s and early 1960s were a golden era for surfing in California. The crowds hadn't yet become unbearable and there were still surfing spots to be discovered. The new foam boards made it possible to perform maneuvers thought impossible in earlier days. Few surfers during that time realized that commercialization of the sport was well underway and that within a few years many surfers would be yearning for the good old days. Indirectly, many contributed to the commercialization.

his beloved pastime. At a critical moment, while riding a wave past the reviewing stand, he turned on his board and, with his back to the beach, dropped his trunks and mooned the judges. Many others could not resist the contests, though. Free surfboards and surf trunks often went with trophies for the winners, and photo layouts followed in surfing magazines. Today, surfers can make hundreds of thousands of dollars on the pro-surfing circuit, not so much from prize money but from endorsements—

everything from boards, wetsuits, and surf leashes to clothing, sunscreen, and sunglasses. The surf industry generates hundreds of millions in sales.

I was never a fan of surf contests. Judging imposes artificial standards that often make little sense when riding a wave. With the introduction of the super-fast and highly maneuverable short boards, contest wave riding now reminds me of someone performing a floor exercise in gymnastics. Surfers are required to perform a number of standard moves and then spice their routine with some originality—but none of it has much to do with the individual characteristics of the particular wave they are riding. The wave has become secondary to the routine.

I still surf, although I had a gap of nearly 25 years in my wave riding caused by the exigencies of playing Marine, pilot, doctoral student, professor, husband, and father. Adult things interfere with surfing because it requires a lifestyle, not just some allocated time every other day like going to a gym or running the trails. Nature is a fickle mistress: she will give you waves but the wrong wind and tide or perhaps a perfect offshore breeze and the right tide—but no waves. When the waves are pumping and conditions are right, a surfer must drop everything and hit the beach. A day late (or even a few hours late) will cause the tardy surfer to hear, “You should have been here yesterday.” I’ve been fortunate to catch some great days—I had the biggest surf of my life the week before Christmas in Hawaii—and am paid enough deference to have a few waves to myself. Maybe it’s my white hair. And I can still say, after all these years, there is nothing as stoking as a good wave. ■

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**Senior Pentagon sources report that President George W. Bush has informed Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that his principal foreign-policy objective during his second term will be to change the governments of both Syria and Iran.**

Per Bush, the U.S. cannot allow Iran to become nuclear-weapons capable, and all contingencies to deal with the problem must be developed premised on the expectation that nonmilitary efforts will be unavailing. Staff work is already underway at the National Security Council to develop a series of position papers that will articulate the new policy, particularly *vis-à-vis* Iran. Pentagon-generated analyses, largely blocked in the first Bush term by former Secretary of State Colin Powell, will provide the backbone for the new U.S. policy initiative, which will be openly articulated as regime change. New National Intelligence Estimates and studies on Iran’s weapons of mass destruction are also being prepared by the intelligence community. The new Iran policy has already been suggested in the president’s public remarks, particularly his State of the Union address, in which he promised solidarity with those Iranians who opposed the ayatollahs, though government spokespersons have avoided explicitly calling for regime change. The White House does not support European diplomatic efforts because it does not believe that they will lead to a verifiable Iranian agreement to cease all nuclear-weapons development efforts. As in Iraq, President Bush believes that only a military option to deal with Iran will bring about the desired result. Aggressive intelligence and reconnaissance activity directed against Iran is currently underway, including testing Iranian air defenses. New but still uncorroborated intelligence that Iran has acquired uranium hexafluoride from North Korea has added urgency to the situation. That material is precisely the step in the nuclear cycle that Iran was having serious difficulty in producing.



**Pakistan has issued new rules of engagement permitting its army to fire on U.S. forces that cross the border from Afghanistan without co-ordinating first.**

President Musharraf has been receiving angry reports from his military that U.S. forces have been engaging in hot pursuit across the border in violation of bilateral agreements. Musharraf is also unhappy about the recent abrupt withdrawal of Predators and other surveillance resources from Pakistan for transfer to Iraq for use against Iran. According to high-level Pakistani sources, Musharraf and his army chiefs expended a great deal of political capital in their support of the al-Qaeda hunt, clashing frequently with hostile tribesmen along the border. The U.S. Central Command’s January announcement that the drones and other supporting surveillance technologies that were being used against al-Qaeda would be withdrawn to support “elections in Iraq” was an unpleasant surprise, particularly when “in Iraq” turned out to be a euphemism for “against Iran.” The drones have not yet been returned, and many operations in the border areas are reported to be on hold. Musharraf has had a difficult time explaining to his own supporters in the military, and to the Pakistani public, why he continues to be so supportive of U.S. policies in the region.

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# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Bride and Prejudice*]

### Austen in a Sari

By Steve Sailer

Each week in 1930, America's 123 million people bought 90 million movie tickets. There were no televisions, no home air conditioners, and little street crime, so many ladies went to the show in the evenings. Hollywood catered to their tastes with countless musicals and love stories.

Today, the average American purchases a ticket less than one-seventh as often, and moviegoers are predominantly male and young. Hollywood therefore specializes, at vast expense, in blowing stuff up.

Foreign film industries can't compete with our \$100 million evil-robot-onslaught flicks, but they can make women's movies. The leading supplier to semiliterate Third World ladies is the Indian movie business, Bombay-centered "Bollywood."

India is an apt setting for complicated love stories because it has barely begun the slow transition from arranged marriages to love matches, what Samuel Huntington calls "the Romeo and Juliet revolution." The conflict between a complex social order and true love might be the most compelling and fertile subject in all of literature, which is why Jane Austen's novels have been filmed so often. But Westerners now have so much sexual freedom that they dither their lives away, unable to commit because somebody better might always come

along. This makes for clever comedy, as "Seinfeld," "Friends," and "Bridget Jones's Diary" attest, but paltry passion.

In contrast, because the maidens in Bollywood movies, which don't even show kissing, can't have sex, and their parents have vetted their beaux' financial prospects, they are free to bask in romance.

Since dumping Fabian socialism in 1991, India has been on the rise. Many Americans guiltily worry that they really ought to learn something about this ignored giga-country, but the subcontinent is dauntingly convoluted to the point of sensory overload, as exemplified by the dazzling opening chapter of Kipling's *Kim*.

But now a guide is at hand, offering a relatively painless way for Westerners to see a quasi-Bollywood movie adapted to our politically correct tastes.

Gurinder Chadha, a Kenyan-born Sikh raised in Britain, directed the surprise low-budget hit of 2003, "Bend It Like Beckham," a cliché-ridden girl-power movie about a teenage London Sikh lass who would rather head soccer balls into the goal than play a role in her big sister's marriage ceremony. Call it "My Big Fat Sikh Heading."

Yet seeing an Indian wedding sounded like a lot more fun than your typical nil-nil soccer match, and Chadha must have agreed because her new film, "Bride and Prejudice," a Bollywoodized English-language musical version of Austen's classic transplanted to Amritsar, features three glittering weddings, each of which must have cost a zillion rupees.

Actually, the budget for "Bride and Prejudice" was only \$7 million, one-ninth of the typical American studio effort, but for that sum you can hire all the top talent in Bollywood, including its most idolized actress, green-eyed Aishwarya Rai, the Miss World of 1994. She

plays, curiously enough, the Elizabeth Bennett role of the witty but not beautiful daughter. (Interestingly, the ravishing Miss Rai weighs about 20 pounds more than she would if she were working in America. Apparently, Indians don't find Hollywood's mandatory famine-victim diet alluring.)

Cinematographically, even India's best can't begin to compare to what Chinese films like "Hero" are doing, but the costumes and sets of "Bride and Prejudice" are so extravagant that the artlessness of their presentation hardly detracts. Likewise, Bollywood choreography, which the film's rich American Mr. Darcy (Luke Wilson look-alike Martin Henderson) describes as screwing in a light bulb with one hand while patting the dog with the other, is ho-hum, but the Indians endearingly don't care, and you will have more fun if you don't either. Bollywood is blessedly free of irony.

As a writer and director, Chadha is a hack, but her movies are interesting precisely because of her crowd-pleasing commercial instincts. She overlights the swirling colors and when in doubt about what to shoot always opts for another close-up of her lovely leading lady. Her attempts at crafting spunky retorts to Mr. Darcy produce merely resentful post-colonialist cant, third-hand renditions of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. Mercifully, it's soon time for more dancing.

Fortunately, Nitin Ganatra is hilarious as Mr. Kholi, Austen's insufferable unwanted suitor. Here, he's a San Fernando Valley accountant with preposterous hip-hop affectations in the Ali G tradition. He can promise American green cards not just to the heroine, but, eventually, to her entire family, which shows how our inexplicable immigration laws encourage the loveless arranged marriages our movies oppose. ■

Rated PG-13 for one barnyard expletive.



## BOOKS

[*America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, Anatol Lieven, Oxford University Press, 274 pages]

# America's New Nationalism

By Scott McConnell

OF THE SCORES of good books published in the last year about American foreign policy, the young British scholar Anatol Lieven's *America Right or Wrong* stands ahead and apart. An erudite analysis of the historical and cultural strands that have forged contemporary American nationalism, it is the antidote to a view now popular among Bush administration critics: there is little wrong with American foreign policy that reducing the influence of several dozen Beltway neoconservatives would not cure. While Lieven carries no water for the neocons, he will convince many readers that if William Kristol, Richard Perle, and company had not been around after 9/11 to push a unilateralist war plan, Americans would have somehow invented them. Lieven is one of the rare authors who can change minds on a subject where opinions are firmly entrenched.

He sets out to explain "why a country which after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, had the chance to create a concert of all the world's major states—including Muslim ones—against Islamist revolutionary terrorism chose instead to pursue policies which divided the West, further alienated the Muslim world and exposed America itself to greatly increased danger." His answer is that the terror attacks roused from slumber a not-so-attractive American nationalism—a doctrine that incorporates in roughly equal measure both

what is "best" in the American experience (respect for formal liberties and republican government) and what he most dislikes (religious, anti-elitist, racially tinged populism). The result is a kind of isolationist spirit with a global reach, which he likens at one point to a sort of national autism. Some will resist seeing their country through the eyes of a European intellectual, especially one not given to diplomatic euphemism. But they will miss something: the author knows the United States deeply, has lived here for a long time, and without question wishes us well. Yet this affection hardly mutes his criticism.

For example: "trailing one's coat." Lieven resurrects this 18th-century phrase for provoking a quarrel by dragging one's coat along a crowd so that another man will step on it. As he puts it, "American imperialists trail America's coat over the whole world and rely on America to react with 'don't tread on me' nationalist fury when the coat is trodden on." The analogy explains something of the seeming paradox that while most

concrete reasons of state. Thus, wide swatches of the American establishment quickly convinced themselves that al-Qaeda initiated war on the United States because it "hated freedom" rather than because of opposition to American presence and policies in the Mideast.

Lieven views American nationalism as drawing sustenance from a pool of reactionary racial and ethnic resentments, and here his critique is conventionally liberal (and somewhat overstated). But he has novel and challenging observations to make as well. One is a link between America's foreign policy and the new reign of political correctness, most pronounced on matters pertaining to race. He admires America's transformation from a slave-holding country waging an expansionist war against Indian tribes to a nation upholding equal rights for all. But there might be a cost to the new anti-racist consciousness. He suggests an analogy in the Claymore mine. Shrapnel and explosives are packed in, the rear and sides blocked, so the explosion hurls the shrapnel out in

WHEN A NATION'S SELF-DEFINITION IS GROUNDED IN THE IDEA OF DEMOCRACY, POTENTIAL ENEMIES SPRING UP EVERYWHERE—ANY COUNTRY THAT DOES NOT SHARE THE CREED IS A CANDIDATE.

Americans aren't much interested in foreign interventions in the abstract, they always rally when the fighting starts. Opposed in principle to an imperialist policy, they end up supporting one.

Lieven admires the formal elements of the American Creed as stated in the Constitution and Declaration, stressing individual rights and liberties. But even the positive has its drawbacks. When a nation's self-definition is grounded in the idea of democracy, potential enemies spring up everywhere—any country that does not share the creed is a candidate. American leaders who have fully internalized the creed are prone to conclude that those who oppose the United States must do so because of opposition to democracy itself, not for more banal or

one direction. Since proponents of any sentiment deemed racist now face social censure and often loss of employment in the United States, the only permissible focus for group hostility is outward. As Lieven puts it, "the suppression of feelings at home may have only increased the force with which they are directed at foreigners, who remain a legitimate and publicly accepted target of hatred."

Lieven closes with a long and tightly argued chapter on America and the Israel-Palestine conflict—that realm where the distance between American attitudes and those of the rest of the world is greatest and poses the most peril for the United States. What has occurred, Lieven argues, is a sort of

fusion of Israeli and American nationalisms so that American and Israeli actions in the Middle East are largely perceived as one. To some degree, that foreign perception is correct: Israeli and American attitudes have actually fused.

There are historical reasons for this development. America's own Protestant past and a literalist reading of the Bible among many churches plays a role. So too does America's early conception of itself as a New Israel. Add to that the American frontier narrative, so large a part of our national imagination. Our frontier is now closed and the Indians long since subjugated, but on the West Bank "civilized" Israeli settlers are carving out communities amidst natives who do not want them—or at least the story can be played that way. Add the institutional power of the Israel lobby, and the sum is something more than a relationship between a great power and a dependent ally.

One corollary of Israel's becoming embedded in America's own nationalist narrative is that many American intellectuals have adopted for themselves some of the more extreme ideas circulating in Israel—most dangerously the notion that the entire rest of the world is blindly, irrationally anti-Semitic and malevolent, so it is futile to listen to what other nations actually say.

Historical analogies to such a relationship between a major power and a client state are hard to come by. But Lieven suggests one: in 1914, Russia's rulers, heavily influenced by the ideology of Pan-Slavism, gave Serbia a sort of blank check, a license to press irredentist claims against Austria it would never have dreamed of doing otherwise. The results were lamentable for all concerned.

Or again, Lieven quotes an American diplomat as comparing the more or less unconditional support America gives Israel to supporting a West Germany with undefined and violent eastern borders during the Cold War. Under such circumstances, a peaceful reunification of Europe would never have taken place. Lieven clearly understands and supports the importance of Israel's exis-

tence as a Jewish state with recognized and secure boundaries. He defends the ethnic cleansing (now acknowledged by Israeli historians) that accompanied Zionist victories in the 1948 War as necessary to set up a viable Jewish state without a hostile internal minority. In public forums, he argues that acceptance of Israel's right to exist within secure boundaries is the essential admission ticket to serious debate on the subject. Such views, fairly conventional and, in my opinion, correct, are a platform from which he makes several other points, equally correct but hardly ever voiced in American discourse.

For instance, Lieven discusses the Palestinians' "original sin"—their failure to accept the UN's partition resolution of 1947, their readiness to fight Israel from the beginning. This history is often used to posit an irrational hatred of Israel's very existence on the part of the Arabs and to delegitimize the notion that any land-for-peace agreement is plausible. But Lieven adds to the discussion two facts that are almost always left out. Quoting Hannah Arendt, he reminds us that the Zionists in the 1940s demonstrated little inclination to grant any right at all to the Arabs in the Palestine

should be given up to form the state of Israel, they would have been acting in a way which, as far as I am aware, would have had no precedent in all of human history."

Lieven makes equally short work of the Beltway platitude, the boilerplate of ten thousand Congressional speeches, that Israel is America's "strategic asset" in the Mideast and its only friend. Friend it may be. But Israel's non-strategic asset status is "conclusively demonstrated by Israel's role, or rather non-role, in the Iraq wars of 1991 and 2003 in which Israeli forces did not participate. Of course they were begged by Washington not to participate, so as not to infuriate the Arab world." Lieven concludes dryly, "Strategic allies are supposed to come into their own when there is a conflict in their region. It is a funny kind of ally which has to be asked to go away and keep quiet so as not to cause vastly increased trouble."

An odd situation has arisen in which American nationalism—for good and ill more than 200 years in the making—cannot be seriously discussed without elucidating the role Israel has come to play in it. This notion would astonish every previous generation of American

LIEVEN CONCLUDES DRYLY, "IT IS A FUNNY KIND OF ALLY WHICH HAS TO BE ASKED TO GO AWAY AND KEEP QUIET SO AS NOT TO CAUSE VASTLY INCREASED TROUBLE."

Mandate territory. The American Zionist convention of 1944 called for Jews to be granted "the whole of Palestine undivided and undiminished"—leaving the Arabs no choice but between emigration and second-class citizenship and hardly encouraging Arabs to believe that Israel itself would accept partition, regardless of what Zionist diplomats said at the time. Furthermore, it is often forgotten just what the Arabs were being asked to do. As Lieven points out, "If the Palestinian Arabs in the 1930's and 1940's had agreed that a large part of Palestine—where they were still a large majority ...

statesmen, and stating it now will enrage many. But as America today occupies two Muslim countries and threatens two others, it is hardly honest not to include it. Lieven's book has much that will annoy both conservatives and liberals; it has already brought forth the kind of denunciations meant to isolate and exclude from discussion—the regrettable consequence of candid writing about a vital topic. *America Right or Wrong* is nonetheless a *tour de force* of rhetoric, scholarship, and analysis, and deserves the widest possible readership. ■

[Michael Oakeshott: An Introduction, Paul Franco, Yale University Press, 209 pages]

## Philosophy, Not Politics

By Gene Callahan

WHEN THE ENGLISH PHILOSOPHER Michael Oakeshott died in 1990, the *Guardian* called him “perhaps the most original academic political philosopher of this century.” The *Independent* declared that he had offered “the most eloquent and profound philosophical defence of conservative politics that the present century has produced.” Not to be outdone, the *Daily Telegraph* proclaimed that Oakeshott “was the greatest political philosopher in the Anglo-Saxon tradition since Mill—or even Burke.” It is ironic that such praise followed the death of a thinker who, during his life, was often neglected because he was out of step with intellectual fashion, or worse, dismissed as a mere apologist for reactionary politics.

While laudatory, these obituaries fail to do justice to the scope of Oakeshott's thought. Politics was only one of the many areas he examined, and his conservatism was not an ideological stance but the expression of his fundamental understanding of the nature of human life. Oakeshott was far from being a pitchman for the Thatcherite revolution in Britain, as some characterized him. There was, in fact, “very little of Oakeshott in Thatcher's Hayekian emphasis on economic productivity and prosperity,” as Paul Franco notes. Instead of a partisan program, in Oakeshott “there is a historical and philosophical depth that is often missing in even the best contemporary political theory.”

*Michael Oakeshott: An Introduction* goes a long way toward improving our understanding of this beguiling, elusive thinker. Franco, a professor of government at Bowdoin College, has produced

an engaging account of Oakeshott's ideas that is both suitable for readers new to them and enlightening to long-time Oakeshott aficionados. Of particular interest to the latter is Franco's success in placing his subject's thought in the larger context of contemporary political philosophy, a matter to which Oakeshott himself paid little attention.

Franco's effort is especially praiseworthy because Oakeshott's intellectual journey did not follow a single, straight highway. He wrote on religion, metaphysics, politics, aesthetics, morality, education, history, and even horse racing. (He co-authored a book called *A Guide to the Classics*, a primer for picking winners at the track.) What's more, while Oakeshott often revised his opinions, sometimes dramatically, he rarely paused to explain his reasons for doing so, seemingly concerned only with expressing his current view. He remains best known, as illustrated by the obituary notices, for his writings on politics, but even there he is not easy to pigeon-hole. He is most often categorized as a conservative—a label he embraced at times—but various libertarians, liberals, and communitarians have drawn inspiration from his work.

Space does not permit discussion of every aspect of Oakeshott's thought that Franco addresses, so instead I will touch on a few highlights of this volume, hoping to inspire my readers to discover the rest for themselves. Oakeshott's first book, *Experience and Its Modes*, is an uncompromising argument for philosophical idealism. As Franco summarizes his subject's metaphysics, “The objects of experience are not independent of our experiencing of them but are constituted by mind or thought.” This does not mean Oakeshott believed “that the subject of experience is the sole reality and the cause of what is experienced.” Like Hegel, whom he greatly admired, Oakeshott was an “objective idealist.” To understand what that means, consider that the experience of falling off a high cliff will consistently lead to the experience of a smashed up body, however much the person falling

tries to believe otherwise. It is the inescapable regularity with which certain experiences follow upon others that makes the world of experience a reality to which humans must adjust their conduct, rather than a dream or a fiction.

As Franco explains, for Oakeshott, experience is composed of distinct modes or what the philosopher would later call “platforms of understanding.” These modes include science, history, and practical life. Since each grapples with experience from a fundamentally distinct perspective, none is in a position to critique ideas arising from the others. Franco contends that Oakeshott was particularly concerned to safeguard religion, which he considered to be the pinnacle of practical life, from scientific and historical attempts to debunk faith. Oakeshott saw such criticism as being guilty of irrelevance. Religion is the sole relief within the practical world from the otherwise ceaseless pursuit of satisfactions, which once achieved only give rise to new desires. What matters about a creed is not its conformity with the findings of science or history but the solace it brings to the adherent in his practical life.

Franco argues that Oakeshott's political philosophy followed naturally from his metaphysics. Since philosophy is not merely a more rigorous examination of commonsense ideas, but is instead experience itself viewed from a vantage different from that of practical life, it is not in a position to expound abstract rules or *a priori* principles that can direct everyday conduct. Oakeshott's commentary on Plato's famous allegory of the cave provides an apt illustration of how he conceives the relationship between theory and practice. He considers Plato correct in holding that the theorist, in turning his back on the shadows on the cave walls and ascending toward the light, achieves an understanding superior, in a sense, to those concerned only with practical affairs. But Oakeshott dismisses Plato's conclusion that, as a result, the theorist can dictate correct practice to those who have remained behind in the cave. Their

focus on the practical world produces genuine knowledge for dealing with the shadows. The philosopher may intrigue the horseman when he declares that philosophy has revealed that "horse" is really an idea in the mind of God. But if the philosopher then insists on lecturing him about the proper handling of horses, despite never having been near one, the horseman will rightly regard him as a charlatan.

Consequently, Oakeshott derides any ideology that proposes the wholesale reconstruction of traditional social institutions, customs, and morals on the basis of some theoretician's fantasy as "rationalism in politics." (That phrase became the title of his most famous book.) Such an effort will never succeed, since abstract principles cannot by themselves generate a concrete way of living. Attempts to force a society to fit some theoretical mold are only likely to do significant damage to traditions grounded in centuries of practical experience. Oakeshott directed the bulk of

his scorn for such schemes at the social planners of the Left. But he also criticized several thinkers of the Right, who might otherwise have seemed his natural allies, for sharing this mistaken notion. Commenting on Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, Oakeshott wrote, "a plan to resist all planning may be better than its opposite, but it belongs to the same style of politics." For Oakeshott, political philosophy and practical politics remain absolutely distinct from one another.

Central to his last major work on politics, *On Human Conduct*, was his conception of "civil association" and "enterprise association" as different types of human relationship. In an enterprise association, individuals are related by their agreement to co-operate in pursuing some substantive end—for example, the participants in the Coca-Cola Company hope to make money by selling soda. The members of a civil association have no such goal in common; they are related in their recognition of a body of law that delimits the acceptable means they may employ in pursuing their own diverse ends.

Different strands of European political thought have characterized the state as either an enterprise or a civil association. Oakeshott saw this as a major source of the confused character of the modern European state. His sympathies clearly lay with such classical liberals as Locke, Burke, Tocqueville, and Acton, who conceived of the state as properly based on civil association, which Oakeshott called "the most civilized and least burdensome conception of a state yet to be devised." He noted that a compulsory enterprise association—for example, a state attempting to achieve some desired distribution of income—cuts "the link between belief and conduct which constitutes moral agency."

Some of the conclusions Oakeshott arrived at in contemplating these modes of association seem particularly relevant today. Since modern warfare tends to encompass all of society, it strengthens the tendency to regard the state as an enterprise association: "War in a modern ... state is the enemy of civil

association." Furthermore, the currently popular notion of "nation building" is based on "one of the most insidious current misunderstandings of political activity," the misunderstanding in which the arrangements of a society are made to appear, not as manners of behaviour, but as pieces of machinery to be transported about the world indiscriminately." Here Oakeshott presciently describes the pundits who today propose that the American state should forcibly mold others into its own image.

Franco's book is not without flaws, the most serious of which are the handful of passages in which the author apparently felt compelled to nod to political correctness. For example, Oakeshott believed that a liberal university education should not be confused with vocational training. It ought to offer a "respite from the 'danse macabre' of wants and satisfactions" that currently dominates the world," leading the student to see himself "in the mirror of [the] historic and contingent inheritance" that makes up his civilization. Given that view, Oakeshott naturally was distressed by the wave of career-oriented students who arrived at British universities in the wake of World War II. Franco declares such anti-egalitarianism to be "the most glaring ... failure" of Oakeshott's philosophy of education, and faults him for neglecting "any sort of consideration of equity." But such a concern would have been inconsistent with Oakeshott's general conception of liberal education, which emphatically denies it the task of boosting the student's future earning power or career prospects. It is difficult to reconcile Franco's admiration for Oakeshott's overarching thought with his rejection of one of its logical consequences.

Despite this complaint, I can wholeheartedly recommend this excellent book both for newcomers to, and for old hands at, the ideas of one of the most important thinkers of the past century. ■

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[*An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power*, John Steele Gordon, HarperCollins, 480 pages]

# Hamilton's Empire

By James Gass

THE ROMANS HAD their legions, the British had their colonies, and according to John Steele Gordon's new book, *An Empire of Wealth*, the American imperium stands on its treasure.

How did a small collection of rebellious British colonies on the West Atlantic coast transform itself into the most influential money power in the world? These days, most intellectuals would answer—by subjugating Indians, enslaving Africans, and unleashing rapacious capitalists. But Gordon breaks with his friends at PBS and the *New York Times* and reveals an epic about the economic grandeur of the American experiment. In this popular history, Columbus, Washington, Carnegie, and Edison are back on their pedestals and Wall Street takes center stage.

Vanity might prompt us to think that the pecuniary glory of America was all our own doing. Clearly, though, Americans inherited many of their best principles from Great Britain's legal, political, and financial traditions. All of the accomplishments of the U.S., however, cannot be ascribed to what America took from John Locke, the Glorious Revolution, and *The Wealth of Nations*.

The distinctiveness of America's economic outlook from John Winthrop and William Penn through Jefferson and Lincoln was that it was not just about the money. In the Declaration of Independence only two of the 28 grievances against the king are related to commerce, and the Lockean term "property" is not mentioned at all. But American republicanism did preserve "the sacred fire of liberty" from which democratic wealth could be produced.

Furthermore, America succeeded not because it conquered, pillaged, and lorded over the peoples of the world as Rome or Britannia did. Rather, the country thrived because it provided an exceptional combination of security and opportunity which motivated immigrants to arrive on its shores and emulate its spirit of enterprise. Gordon sees America's "get up and go" as initiated by "people who got up and came." This sounds mythical, but in the New World risk-taking navigators, colonial entrepreneurs, and religious dissenters equally with the huddled masses won the day. In America, human self-interest for gain has been more effectively released, assimilated, and controlled than anywhere else.

Alexander Hamilton is the hero of the book. And who better represents Britain's heritage and the strivings of America's immigrants? Called "the bastard brat of a Scotch peddler" by John Adams, the Nevis-born Hamilton rearranged the conflicting notes of modern constitutionalism, banking, mercantilism, and the free market into the basis for the "American System." Unlike the man, Hamilton's economic ideas survived Aaron Burr's bullet, but many of today's scholars seem intent on finishing Burr's work. They praise Hamilton the icon, but take aim at his policies, which ensured the nation's economic independence.

Gordon is so eager to present us with a user-friendly Hamilton that he overlooks Jefferson's creation of the U.S. Patent Office, which secured exclusive rights for inventors across the country to profit from their own ideas. Over 200 years and 7 million patents later, Jefferson's pet project has guarded America's intellectual property as vigorously as Hamilton's vision cultivated our industries. We learn that beginning in 1789, "second only to slavery, the tariff would be the most contentious issue in Congress for the next hundred years." But Gordon's bias against protectionism stops him from fully reconciling America's economic emergence with its commitment to the Framers' political economy.

Consequently, Andrew Jackson gets faint praise for his resolute positions against the Nullifiers' attempts to ditch the nation's trade policy. Moreover, Gordon's account does not connect the free-trade policies of 20th-century politicians with their mid-19th-century origins in the doctrines of John C. Calhoun and the Confederacy. Gordon nonetheless emphasizes that Jackson's veto of the Second Bank of the United States deconstructed a key pillar of America's financial stability. It is apparent that General Jackson's "Bank War" was one of the chief reasons for the country's various depressions through the 19th and early 20th centuries. "Old Hickory," however, does receive some credit for fiscal responsibility, as the only president in history to retire the national debt.

Trade historian Alfred Eckes explains that Lincoln's tariff-centric GOP between 1860 and 1910 ensured that trade duties averaged 52 percent of federal revenues. As such, the robber barons and tariffs provided the gleam on the Gilded Age, while America's GNP grew at double the rate of Western Europe's. Meanwhile, industrialism's excesses conjured dreams of liberating workers with social reforms and free-trade's cheap consumerism. Democrats Cleveland, Wilson, and FDR then caused America to switch revenue streams from taxing foreigners with tariffs to taxing its own citizens' incomes.

Unmistakably, the United States' independence and belated entry into the World Wars guaranteed its great economic triumph. By 1919, the Allies owed the U.S. and J.P. Morgan \$9.6 to \$12 billion, while the United States became the world's leading creditor and industrial and financial power. This exalted position, due to \$50 billion in Lend-Lease loans and World War II, reached its apex in 1945.

Gordon claims that FDR was a benevolent "American dictator." Here we more seriously part ways. From small businesses to the Congress, the nation stooped before FDR's consolidated power, his centralized planners, and the omnipresence of his federal

bureaucracies. Despite presiding over \$450 billion in federal spending and make-work projects, unemployment during his four terms never dipped below 14 percent. In the final assessment, FDR's anti-depressant message that somebody cared and his optimism helped the nation psychologically, but it was World War II's doubling of the GNP that pulled the country from the economic edge.

In 1945, after the Great Powers were war torn and in debt, the U.S. produced half the world's coal, two-thirds of its oil, over half of its electricity, and comprised half of the world's GNP. In thousands of years, no nation had ever seen such economic dominance, but the New Deal's agenda, based on perpetual crisis, became redundant during the coming peace and prosperity.

To my mind, the Bretton Woods Keynesians—Harry Dexter White, Cordell Hull, and Henry Morgenthau—usurped the Framers' Constitution. Rather than defending private initiative and productivity, the New Dealers used government for global social engineering. Their economics created, according to Lord

constituted 3 percent of GNP, while they represented more than 20 percent by 2000. Gordon writes that before 1933, the budget had been in surplus two-thirds of the time, and afterwards only 16 percent. Did Bretton Woods really "save capitalism" if Americans work from Monday till Wednesday noon to support their government's voracious social spending?

Jacques Barzun once declared that the faith of our age is the welfare-state ethos. Welfare in America has been halved since 1996, but entitlement spending still constitutes approximately 41 percent of the federal budget. Perhaps as Social Security becomes insolvent, value-added manufacturing jobs are given away, and our globetrotting continues, we may finally be permitted to see FDR as a man, and not a Depression-era demigod.

Gordon holds that America won the Cold War with "money not bullets." Defense spending under LBJ went from \$50 billion to \$82 billion, and under Reagan it increased by 50 percent in his first six years. In 2003-04, U.S. military

have pretended that debts and deficits do not matter. Presciently, a Treasury secretary during the '50s said, "I do not think you can spend yourself rich."

"In 2000," writes Gordon, "the total world trade was 125 times the level of 1950, equaling an astounding \$7.5 trillion." In early 2005, however, the Commerce Department reported that the U.S. trade deficit grew to a record \$60 billion for November 2004 and is on pace for \$600 billion per annum. Free trade might be, "[T]he greatest engine of economic growth the world has ever known;" nevertheless, as an unemployed Kodak engineer from Rochester, New York said, "Wealth is really about making things."

With productive manufacturing being liquidated monthly and the U.S. now third in producing patents, America has turned to the junk economy of retail consumption, the service sector, frivolous lawsuits, and casinos. In 2003, a Manhattan Institute report stated that, "[T]ort costs today exceed \$200 billion annually, or more than two percent of America's GNP." Since the mid-1970s, the lawsuit industry has grown faster than both the GNP and the population. Moreover, since the 1990s, Las Vegas has been the fastest growing city in America, and gambling is annually a \$60 billion enterprise. With this perfect-storm economy, why are we surprised that the dollar has lost half its value in the last three years?

Despite our government's bleak financial house, *An Empire of Wealth* brims with pride and confidence. From Microsoft and Google to Hollywood and Nobel Prize winners, the fact that America's economy is approximately 30 percent of the world's GNP should prevent us from reaching for the ration stamps and Mason jars. But in order for optimism to be genuine, it must be grounded in financial realities and not vague platitudes about the global economy. Therein resides America's obligation to our posterity. ■

*James Gass writes from the Boston area.*

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Skidelsky, Keynes's biographer, "[A] point of equilibrium between individualism and collectivism." The utopian endgame—free trade and globalism would abolish nationalism and war.

The assumptions of this international New Deal were also based on massive U.S. foreign economic aid. From the \$13 billion Marshall Plan to the \$150 billion in foreign assistance between 1945 and 1970 to the billions for currency bailouts in the 1990s, America became the spending martyr of globalism. Ancient history shows us that plundering the treasury to buy popularity and compliance is a shortsighted game.

Stanford historian David Kennedy notes that in 1929, federal expenditures

spending was approximately \$100 billion more than the next nine military-spending nations combined. But as President Eisenhower's farewell address warned, being GloboCop has addicted us to war making and a crushing intergenerational debt.

As in his 1997 book *Hamilton's Blessing*, Gordon's enthusiasm for national debt as a source for money supply gets ahead of itself. In 1980, the national debt relative to GDP was "only 34.5 percent" and in 1994 "it equaled 68.9 percent." Today, America's virtually unpayable \$7.6 trillion national debt represents 70 percent of the GDP and would cost each American a staggering \$25,768.55 to settle up. For decades now, both parties

# Open to Debate



Don't get your hopes up. There have been many false dawns in the Middle East, starting with the Holy Land. Will it be any different now?

I do not think so. As I write, Benjamin Netanyahu, the hard-line former Israeli prime minister, now finance minister, has recently been heckled by right-wing extremists angered by plans to withdraw Jewish settlers from Gaza. (A plate was thrown and his car tires slashed during a wedding.) These Israeli extremists are a tiny minority, ultranationalist settlers, mostly American, I'm afraid, and they maintain a stranglehold over more reasonable Israelis. The other side is just as bad, if not worse. Islamic militants are as opposed to peace as Jewish hardliners, the difference being that the Israelis can control their gangsters, whereas Mahmoud Abbas cannot.

The first steps to the peace process are easy: a ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and the creation of a Palestinian mini-state. Then comes the hard part. After Gaza, what else is Sharon willing to give up? He has said little about the West Bank, the jewel of the crown, as they say. What about the settlements, the status of Jerusalem, the borders of the mini-state, the wall, and the return of the refugees? George W. Bush has said that there will be no right of return for Palestinian refugees to Israel. Can Abbas carry the can on this one? I don't think so.

What Bush should say is that refugees should be compensated, that they have rights to the West Bank, and that Jerusalem should be shared. If Bush talked about freedom for Palestinians in the same voice as he does where Iraq is concerned, perhaps Israeli hardliners would get the message. But this he does not do. The Israel lobby would make mincemeat of him quicker than you can say AIPAC.

Islamic militants dream of the glories of the caliphate in the Holy Land, just as Israeli militants dream that they are bringing about the coming of the Messiah. The problem seems insoluble, a pipedream. And yet people are trying.

The debate is a Greek invention, one that has served us well throughout the ages. I recently attended one in London, at Intelligence Squared, or IQ2, as it calls itself. This debating forum is new, but it has been so successful it threatens to overtake the Oxford Union as Europe's *numero uno* debating society. As it happens, I escorted Jemima Goldsmith, Sir James's beautiful daughter, Jemima being Hugh Grant's squeeze and a very precious escort to be sure, not because of her beauty, but because of her Jewishness. (Tempers are prone to be lost when Jews and the Palestinians are involved in debate, so I was covering my flanks).

The format was simple. Three on each side, nine minutes each, followed by a vote. The place was sold out—900 people, give or take a few. The motion was "Is Zionism the Real Enemy of the Jews?" All six debaters were Jewish, some of them Israelis. What struck me was the tone, both of the debaters as well as of the audience. There were no insults, no screams of outrage, no recriminations. During the question and answer period, people remained polite and very civil. (There could be no such debate in, say, the Big Bagel, as I call New York City, because of the intolerance so many backers of Israel feel toward anyone who disagrees with them where Israel is concerned.)

Here it is in a nutshell: the anti-motion speakers agreed that the Holocaust

should not give the Jews and Israel any moral immunity from criticism—BUT—that the vilification of Israel by certain European newspapers has long superseded what may be defined as legitimate criticism and that UN resolutions are devoted to human rights abuses in Israel but ignore the real abuses elsewhere. The point I liked the best was that Israel is the only nation whose civilian courts have such a broad jurisdiction over military actions. All very true and well presented.

The pro-motion speakers were more vigorous, especially a British academic and an Israeli journalist. Ariel Sharon, we were told, personifies the xenophobic, aggressive, and expansionist brand of Zionism. He has waged a savage war against the Palestinians, and his policies include the confiscation of their lands, the demolition of their houses, the curfews, the roadblocks, the systematic abuse of Palestinian human rights, and the illegal wall, which they said is as much about land-grabbing as it is about security. An Israeli journalist spoke about how uncomfortable she felt in the role of Member of the Master Race and how Israel's behavior has led to the upsurge of the new anti-Semitism throughout the world.

Of course, I agreed with her. Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinians has turned into a great liability and a moral burden, and only Jewish fanatics refuse to see this undeniable truth. But what about the suicide bombers, cry the militant Zionists. Well, it is a cruel irony that a country that was built out of the desert as a haven for Jews after the war has turned into the least safe place on earth for Jews to live. Militants on both sides should reflect a bit on this, and I expect Jews to think about it more, as they have much more to lose than those who have nothing. ■

# It might be the most taboo question in America, but why are today's kids more troubled, more overweight, "learning disabled," and plagued by STDs?

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— Rich Lowry, *National Review*

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